

Where have all the Good Men Gone

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Summary: This story starts the morning after the S3 Finale. Emma and Killian have just spent a blissful first night together. Something happens in town and the women of Storybrooke wake up to find that all of their men are missing. The story will be told from Emma's POV and Killian's POV. This story includes many of our Storybrooke family on this adventure. \* This doesn't pick up Frozen.

## 1. Beautiful Morning

The morning light was shining through the bedroom window. Emma was suddenly aware of why she slept so well the night before. Killian's arms were wrapped around her in a tight embrace as he slept softly breathing into the back of her hair. She snuggled in closer arching her back into him just a little closer and putting her leg in between his. He grabbed her tighter and began kissing the back of her neck with soft little kisses as he spooned her in closer.

"Morning Love", he whispered.

She felt a slight chill as the goosebumps rose down her back. She thought of how they became intimately aware of each other's most ticklish areas last night and a slight flush rose in her cheeks. She twisted around to meet his gaze and hugged him tighter around the waist wiggling in to be closer to him. She tilted her head up and kissed him softly.

"Good Morning Killian", she whispered shyly. She looked to the side feeling a little worried about how he would feel about her this morning.

He pulled at her chin so he could meet her eyes. He kissed her nose and then kissed her lips.

"Last night was amazing Love".

He pulled her closer. She breathed a sigh of relief. She still had that fear in her that would take awhile for her to lose that she wasn't worth staying for. Killian had been the exception to that rule. He had proven time and again that he would not only stay but he would show up when she needed him without asking. Even with all of the pushing that she did he stayed. She snuggled tighter.

"Love, I'm not complaining but you are squeezing me rather tightly".

She looked up and smiled at him.

"I'm just happy you are here and that I can be like this with you."

"Aye, me too. "

Finally he thought. He rolled over and went to pick up his pants. Their clothes were discarded about the room after a hurried disrobing through the doorway.

"Nooo, where are you going?" she protested him getting out of the bed.

He bent down and kissed her on the forehead.

"I'm going to get my beautiful princess some coffee from Grannies. Would you like anything else my Love?"

"While coffee is a lovely thought, I think I would rather you just bring yourself back over here." She patted the bed.

He bent down and kissed her again.

"Swan we are going to need some supplies for what I have in store for you today." He kissed her lightly on the lips resisting her pull.

She slowly started revealing her naked body from under the sheets.

"Killian, Not even for this? " She teased.

He turned around hissing under his breath. "Minx", he whispered.

He quickly discarded his clothes and jumped back into bed with her to make sure that she was once more sated before he took his leave. He waited too long to be with her and if she wanted more he would not deny her even if his task was to please her in other ways. When she fell asleep he quickly and quietly pulled on his clothes, kissed her forehead and left for Grannies.

Emma was startled awake. She couldn't remember the last time she slept so well. She and Killian had such an intimate night and morning that even a sleeping curse would not force her to forget the way he had touched her, the curves of his body, the taste of his lips, and the loving warmth of his arms around her when she fell asleep. The thought of it caused her to hug herself tightly to make sure that she wasn't dreaming. She rolled over expecting to see him sleeping just as soundly beside her but he was missing and only the indentation on

the pillows and warmth of her memories as to where he had been was left. Killian! She called out but heard no reply.

She sat up in bed and picked up her buzzing phone to find out what was so important at that hour in the morning. She saw that it was her mother, Snow, who called so she decided to listen to the voicemail.

Snow sounded frantic and all she could hear was a baby crying loudly in the background.

Emma, your father is missing. I know he wouldn't just leave us please come over. I suspect something may have happened to him.

Emma dropped the phone and that evil nagging pit formed in her stomach. Killian was missing too. Maybe he hadn't just gone to get them coffee from Grannies.

She quickly got out of bed and got dressed. She stopped and wrote a note for Killian just in case her imagination was getting the better of her. She didn't want him to worry if he came back and found she was missing. He was still trying to figure out this world's technology so he didn't have a phone. They also didn't have an abundance of carrier pigeons in storybrooke.

Killian, Mom called and she is frantic. Dad is missing and I need to go find out what happened. Please find me if you get my note. I'll be thinking about you. Yours Always, Emma X

She grabbed her red leather jacket, gun, and car keys before she ran out of the door. She quickly got into the yellow bug and started towards her parent's place. As she drove she noticed that there were not an abundance of men walking the streets of Storybrooke this morning. It wasn't so early that folks would all choose to sleep in on the same day.

She pulled up in front of her parent's house and quickly rushed to get inside.

"Mom, Mom, where are you? Are you ok?" I just got your message.

"Emma! I'm so glad you are here. I'm back here in the kitchen with your brother. He has been very colicky and keeping us up at night. Dad and I have been taking shifts with him. During my shift last night I fell asleep in the baby's room in the rocking chair. When I woke up to get back into bed with your father he was missing."

She started to choke up.

"It's not like your father to just run out and not let me know. He and I share a heart and when something is wrong we can both feel it. I just know that something is wrong.", said Snow.

"Mom, I feel it too. Killian appears to be missing too. I also noticed the lack of men walking the streets of the town this morning. The barber shop was empty, No one was fixing the street and it had been clearly setup for repair, Grannies nearly looked dead. You know the dwarves come every morning at 9 am sharp for breakfast before heading to the mines."

"Emma, what are we going to do? What about Henry? He is a male too?" said Snow.

"Oh Mom, I have to call Regina. I don't like to think of him as a man." Emma picked up her phone and quickly dialed Regina.

"Your brother is here but Henry is a teen. If something did happen to the men, we don't know why they were being taken. The boys could also be taken."

"Regina!"

Emma, what is it? Why are you calling me so early, you sound alarmed?

"Is Henry ok?"

"Why wouldn't Henry be ok, we have gone over this so many times. I was his mother for 10 years before you came back to this town.", snapped Regina.

"No, no, I'm not questioning you as a mother. Something is wrong in Storybrooke. The men appear to be missing."

"What? What are you talking about?"

"Please Regina, just go and check on Henry. Make sure he is sleeping soundly or playing video games, just physically there." Emma implored.

"OK fine. Hang on let me check."

Emma could hear the hesitation in Regina's voice but she knew that Regina understood that living in a magical town that anything could happen.

"Emma, Henry is here." He is sound asleep in his bed.

Emma breathed a sigh of relief.

"Thank you Regina, Keep Henry safe please. I'm going to take a look around the town and find out if there are any others missing.", said Emma.

"OK, call me when you know anything. I'll keep Henry here and put some magical wards on the house."

Emma hugged Snow tightly. She needed comfort and she knew her mother did too.

"Emma, what are we going to do?", said Snow.

"Mom, don't worry. I have faith that we will find them. I will make sure they are ok. No one takes my family and gets away with it." Emma could feel herself heating up.

Her phone began buzzing again. It was Grannie calling.

"Granny?"

"Sheriff , Marian showed up here at the diner looking for Robin. She and Roland are alone and she doesn't know what to do since she isn't from our land. I'll keep her here but could you come by?", asked Granny.

"Granny , have you noticed any other men at the diner today?", asked Emma.

"Hmm, come to think of it no. I thought maybe Robin went to spend time with Regina or something and that was why Marian couldn't find him. I never thought there could be fowl play. ", said Granny.

"A lot of other men are missing Granny including David and Killian. ", she said with a sigh.

"Oh dear I had no idea. I'll spread the word to folks to be on the look out just in case someone might know something.", she said.

"Thanks Granny, call me if you do. I'm going to try to get to the bottom of this.", said Emma.

"OK, will do!", said Granny.

"Mom, Robin is missing too.", said Emma.

## 2. Waking up in a Nightmare

### Ch 2. Killian POV

There was a dank moldy smell coming from the room that they were being held in. Killian opened his eyes and looked around. He had to squint to see the room. He felt as if he had been bashed on the head a few times. He moved his hand up to feel the back of his head only to find he was shackled. He looked around in the dimly lit space to see Charming, Robin, several dwarves, and other men whose faces he recognized from Storybrooke. It appeared they had all suffered the same fate.

The night started out with such promise. He and Emma had just been reunited with the town after being trapped back in time. It was a beautiful reunion that lead to an even more spectacular evening and early morning with just Emma; His dear True Love.

It was confirmed when she finally kissed him in front of Grannies. She completely melted into him and he felt as though they were of one heart when they kissed. They realized that their true home was anywhere they were together. Emma had gained a great appreciation for her family during their Enchanted Forrest adventure back in time. The near miss of her parent's meeting and having to ensure that the future was not altered was enough to help her understand how much she truly loved them. It also didn't hurt that she had this dashing pirate by her side to ensure that she did not fail.

Last night was the greatest night of his existence. He could still taste her on his lips, his body recalled every touch and feeling that they shared. Her skin was so soft to his touch that he felt he had to

be easy with her as not to bruise her. She was like a dream come true to him. How could someone like her love a pirate like him. He felt he was the luckiest man alive to have claimed the heart of such a beautiful person. He just wanted to spend his days making her happy and helping her know how much he loved her. He would never leave her side. She would always know she had him in her corner. She would never be alone again. It dawned on him, she would wake up and he would be gone. She would be alone and wondering where he went. He hung his head at the thought of his lady feeling sad without him.

He pulled the shackles forward and screamed. "What the hell is this place?"

David started to stir at his scream. He was close enough that he could reach out and shake him awake.

"Hey Mate, Are you ok?" He shook him a little harder.

David started coming to. He looked around and pulled his arms as well. He was also shackled.

"Where are we, what is going on?" said David.

"Mate, I don't know. I woke up just like you. It appears there are quite a number of us here in this room.", said Killian.

" I need to get out of here and get back to my family. Emma and Snow could be in danger. Who would do this?", said David.

"Mate, you know as well as I do that the women of Storybrooke can defend themselves but I'm with you. We need to find a way out of here." said Killian.

"Hook, I know you are right but I still can't help but worry. I didn't even see this coming. ", said David.

"I don't know Mate but let's see if we can't get some of the other men up and moving too. Maybe someone has a clue as to what happened to us last night. All I remember is kissing Emma on the head and running out to grab breakfast for her while she slept after an amazing night together. I opened the door and then everything went black." said Killian.

"Hey watch it! That is my daughter you are talking about." David glared at him.

"I'm sorry mate, I know that but I love her with my heart, mind and soul. I would never do anything to harm her and all I can think about is her waking up this morning and me being gone. I don't want her feeling alone ever again.", Killian sighed.

David had a pained look on his face. He knew that Emma had a deep rooted sadness since having been left alone and an orphan her whole life.

"Hook, don't worry. I'm sure that she will realize that you didn't leave her willingly. I am certain that Snow will know as well. She is alone with a colicky baby, getting no sleep, and now I'm not there to help her." David looked down again.

"Mate, its not your fault. We are all here. There must have been something very powerful to have done this to us. To have taken us here to this God forsaken place.", Said Killian.

Robin started to wake.

He opened his eyes with the look of horror on his face. He screamed out "Roland!"

"Mate, its ok. You are ok.", said Killian.

"No, you don't understand. Roland, he was there. He was calling out to me. He saw everything that happened. I've got to get back and make sure he is ok. Marian has only just returned and she won't know what to do or where to go. What if they took Roland or hurt Marian? " said Robin. He shook his head and pulled hard on his shackles.

### 3. Dumbfounded

#### CH3 E POV

Emma sat to think about how to handle this situation. She shook her head at the thought of anything bad happening to her father or Killian. They had such a perfect night and now this. She smiled at the thought of him twirling her at the ball and her heart clenched a little when she thought of him giving up the Jolly Roger to find her.

"Emma, Are you ok?" asked Snow.

"Mom, I know it's just that I finally found someone that I can't live without. I can still feel him. I can still smell him on my skin and on my clothes. I'm just so worried.", said Emma. She could feel the tears pooling in her eyes.

Snow came over and hugged her tightly.

"Emma, we can do this, we can do this together." Snow said and she kissed her on the top of her head.

"Mom, he gave up the Jolly Roger so that he could get a magic bean to come find me."

"Oh Emma, why didn't you say anything." said Snow.

"He just told me last night, I had to pry it out of him. He followed me through that portal, helped me clean up the mistakes in the past, and has just been by me every step of the way since I returned from New York. He has been my best friend and I've pushed him back and forth so much. I'm finally trying to pull him closer and now he is gone. I have to find him. "

Emma wiped the tears from her eyes and stood up. She knew her mother was worried too but she was trying to be strong for her. Snow had her infant brother to think about and this couldn't be a worse time for David to be missing. She knew her mother was trying to make up for lost time and still trying to prove that she wouldn't be alone but Emma needed to be the strong person she had always been.

"OK, I've got this. I just needed a minute to collect myself and let what happened sink in. I'll get them back. Just take care of Neal."

"OK Emma, Please be careful. We don't know what we are dealing with." said Snow.

"I'm going to head over to Grannies to see if anyone else knows anything. Right now we have nothing. It's as if they vanished into thin air." said Emma. She grabbed her keys and rushed on her jacket.

"Mom, I'll be back. Don't go anywhere without calling me first."

Emma gave her a long hug.

"I won't, just stay safe ok. I've just got you back and I can't lose you again." said Snow.

Emma smiled at her as she walked out.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

As Emma drove through the town on the way to the woods she noticed more and more that there were no men walking the streets, driving around, hanging out, or working.

She pulled up in front of Grannies. She noticed a crowd gathering inside. This was going to be bad and without her Father and Mother there to rally the troops it was going to be up to her. She put on a brave face and walked up to the door.

"Hi everyone" she called as the little bell on Grannies door dinged as she walked through. Many voices started talking to her at once and she felt overwhelmed. She scanned the crowd and saw many of the women of Storybrooke had assembled into Grannies. One face was missing, Belle.

"Please everyone, one at a time. I'm just as worried as you and I need to get any information that you can offer to help me figure out who could have done this." called Emma.

The room became uncomfortably calm. Some of the women were huddled together trying to provide each other comfort. She could see their swollen eyes and noses. She felt for them because she knew exactly what they were going through.

"Sheriff I'm glad you could make it. You were right none of the men have been in for their morning breakfast today. Including Grumpy and he is usually here when I unlock the door. He never misses his breakfast." said Granny.

"Has anyone seen Belle this morning? Or Rumplestiltskin?" asked Emma.

The women looked around the room and many were shaking their heads. Emma took note of everyone in the room and decided that she would



have to follow up and look for Belle and Rumple.

"Emma, Please help us, I've just gotten Robin back last night, I can't lose him again." said Marian.

Roland was clinging to her leg for dear life. His little face peering out from behind her and looking up at Emma. Emma could feel the fear emanating off of this poor little boy. She knew what it was like to be left alone, left to fend for herself, and to have no one to go to for comfort. Just the thought scared her. He had lost his mother for so long and now his father.

"Hey Buddy. It's me Emma. She bent down to his level. Don't worry, it will be ok. We'll find your Dad." said Emma.

"He was sleeping in the tent with the Merry Men so that Robin and I could talk. We had much to discuss since for him my absence was years but for me it was only days. " said Marian. She hung her head.

Emma reached out and put her hand on her shoulder to try to comfort her. She knew she was to blame for the situation that was created in this present day. It was both happy and sad at the same time. She knew Regina was still hurting from her decision.

"Roland was there when the men disappeared. There was a wind rustling outside. Robin and I both heard it. We went to check on him and we found him huddled in the tent alone. He was crouched down in the back of the tent with his blanket pulled tightly around him. I grabbed him up and held him. Robin left the tent immediately to go and look for the men to see what happened. He never returned. ", said Marian. She started sobbing. Granny put her arms around Marian and held her. Roland continued to cling to her leg.

The bell to Granny's rang as and Belle came rushing in frantic. "Rumple is missing. I heard him fighting with another man and when I got out of bed to find out what was happening he was gone?" said Belle. She looked a little disheveled and she was clearly sweating.

"Calm down Belle, Rumple isn't the only man in town who is missing. We are all here trying to figure out what might have happened to them. Something or someone has taken them. Did you say that you heard another man arguing with Rumple?" said Emma.

She was hoping that Rumplestiltskin wouldn't have been among the missing and that he might be able to help them.

"Rumple and I were out in a secluded little cottage in the woods. We were married last night and everything seemed wonderful." she said.

"What about the other man, did you see him? What did he sound like? Did you recognize his voice?" asked Emma.

"He had a high pitched giggle and he sounded a lot like Rumple. It wasn't a voice that I recognized." said Belle.

"A high pitch giggle? I thought you said they were fighting. Is there anything else you can remember from the conversation?" asked Emma.

"They were fighting. I heard crashing and raised voices. It was as if the man was taunting Rumple. I couldn't make out much of their conversation except for bits and pieces the voice said - evil witch, lost kingdom, dragon, against his will, sorry friend. Lastly I heard a giggle and then silence. There were also protests from Rumple and he said she would be the last person he would bow to." Said Belle.

Emma stood silent taking in what Belle told her. If whoever this was could best Rumplestiltskin they are in trouble.

#### 4. Giggles and Games

Ch4

Robin looked around the room. He had a look of despair on his face.

"Mate, we are going to find a way out of here. Can you tell us anything about what happened?" asked Killian.

Robin gazed into the morning light that was entering the room by a small window.

"There was a wind rustling outside. Marian and I were alone talking in a separate tent. We went to check on Roland and we found him huddled in the tent alone. He was crouched down in the back with his blanket. Marian grabbed him and I left the tent immediately to go and look for the men to see what happened. Some of the men had a little too much to drink earlier. I wanted to make sure they were ok since they hadn't been in the tent. I walked around in the surrounding woods but no one was to be found. I heard a rustling sound in the bushes. It was Little John, he had passed out alone. The next thing I know I heard this giggling sound and a shimmering wave hit him and poof he was gone. I immediately started running back to the tent and before I could get inside the wave hit me and now I am here with you blokes."

"So there is something magical involved in this kidnapping" said David.

"Great another Magical creature to fight, just what we need, and here we are without any magic to protect us. I don't suppose any of you see the Dark One lying next to you passed out?" asked Killian.

All of the men who were awake looked around at the sleeping bodies to see if Rumplestiltskin was among them. He wasn't.

"Dave, you don't suppose that the Dark one is behind all of this do you?" asked Killian

"All we know is that he isn't in here with us but that doesn't mean he is behind this. What reason would he have to capture all of us?" asked David

"He did leave Grannies pretty early last night. I saw him leave after you announced Prince Neal's name." said Grumpy.

"Quiet Fellas, I hear something coming" said Killian.

There were several bolted locks down the huge steel hinged door. Each lock popped one at a time until the door creaked open. Inside walked a short man with a rather long white beard. He wore a tall pointed blue hat with gold stars all over it. He also wore robes to match that touched the ground as he walked. He was holding a ball of energy in his hands that appeared to hover on top and he was using it for light to search over the room.

"Well Well look at all of our new guests. She will be very pleased indeed." He giggled

"What is the meaning of all of this? Why have you taken us? Asked Killian

All of the men began to grumble and shout.

"It's what she wished. She required me to capture all of the men of Storybrooke and deliver them here to her. I'm just a humble servant. That evil witch has bested me and now I must work off my debt." He giggled again.

He began walking around the room and taking a closer look at each of the men.

"Oh My, I didn't expect to see you again Robin of Loxley", he giggled.

Robin squinted his eyes to adjust to the rough lighting and it was his icy blue eyes that caught him.

"Merlin?" asked Robin.

"Oh Yes my boy, you do remember" he giggled.

"Who is this SHE you are referring to? This witch?" asked Killian

"Mim, she bested me in a duel and the rules are the rules. I must obey her and work off my debt." He giggled.

"This is not a laughing matter. This is serious mate. We need to get back to Storybrooke." Shouted Killian.

"Oh, and you will but it will count on your ladies to best her in order to win you back. You see Mim likes to play games of chance. You have an abundance of magic in your little realm and the women have quite the reputation growing in the magical community. She doesn't like that one bit. She wants to be the top in magic so she ordered me to capture what your women hold most dear. You know, bring them to her as bargaining chips. You my dear fellows are her bargaining chips. She made it very clear though, all of the men." he giggled.

"Merlin, you are the greatest wizard of our realm. How did she best you?"asked Robin.

"My dear boy that is a tale for another day, I'm certain she cheated but I can't prove it." He giggled.

"What about the Dark One, Rumplestiltskin? He isn't here. Doesn't she suppose that he would be willing to help our women in these contests?" asked Killian.

"My dear boy, of course and we have taken extra precautions to keep him contained during these contests. We can't have you men causing any distraction now can we?" he giggled.

He walked over to the door and swung it open to reveal a sleeping scaly light green dragon sleeping in front of it.

"You see, Mim has a fondness for dragons and Rumple here was sure to cause a problem so I had to sneak up on him and turn him before he could best me. He will serve as a guard for this room just in case any of you are clever enough to break through these locks." He looked at Killian and smirked.

"Mim will likely come by to meet you all later, she has a fondness for men and I'm sure she will want to see the lot of you." He giggled.

"You can't just leave us here like this. Are we supposed to just sit here chained up?" asked David.

"You're right; technically you are our guests and leverage for the contest. If the women of Storybrooke see you have been harmed or damaged in any way that could be a problem." He giggled.

He pulled a wand from his deep v'd sleeve and waved it in the air wiggling around and around until Pop " all of their shackles had been removed.

"That ought to do it" he giggled.

Grumpy jumped up to rush him and was immediately pushed back to the ground with a thud.

"Oh dear dwarf, please don't try to hurt me. I'm not the enemy here but you see my heart is being held at this time and I've no control over my actions. I am a powerful wizard you know? Let that be a lesson to all of you. If you try to harm me I will hurt you. Leave me alone and you won't get hurt." He giggled again and then was out with a puff of smoke.

The men all looked at each other woefully. Each man rubbed his hands and feet that were once bound by the shackles.

"Do you know of this Mim, Robin?" asked Killian.

"Yes, have you heard of her? You seemed to know Merlin." Asked David.

"No, I'm afraid I'm unfamiliar with Mim. I knew of Merlin because he served with King Arthur. He is a very powerful wizard so if this Mim was able to best him our ladies will be in trouble." said Robin.

"We don't even know what sorts of contests she wants to play. Do you think they will all be magical? That really leaves Emma, Regina and I suppose the fairies." said David

The men all looked at Robin who had his head hung.

"Mate, I'm sure she wouldn't leave you to rot." Laughed Killian.

"This is no laughing matter, I've hurt her and I didn't even mean to do it. I feel that I might love her." said Robin.

"Sorry Mate this is just not the way I expected to spend the day either." said Killian.

He thought fondly back to this morning when he was holding Emma and thinking now he should have taken her offer to just stay in bed all day.

## 5. Small Wonders and the Looking Glass

### Ch5

The air in the room was very thick. Emma could feel pressure in her chest as she started to feel the weight of what happened. All of their loved ones had vanished without a trace. Rumplestiltskin had been taken after a fight and they had no clues but the gibberish from an argument.

Marian and Roland were seated in one of the booths talking to Granny. Emma went and sat down with them to see if she might be able to talk to the little boy. He might have seen something and right now they needed something.

"Roland can I ask you a few questions?" asked Emma.

Roland peeked up from behind his mothers arm and shook his head yes.

"Did you see what happened to the men who were in the tent with you?" asked Emma

He shook his head again.

"Did you see anyone in the tent that you never saw before?" asked Emma

He shook his head yes again.

"What did he look like?" asked Emma

"Santa" he whispered.

"Santa? Do you mean he had a long white beard and mustache?" asked Emma

He shook his head yes again.

Emma looked at him perplexed and thought Is it possible that Santa is real and that he is evil? Peter Pan was evil, maybe Santa is too?

"Did he have a red suit like Santa?" asked Emma

He shook his head no.

Hmm, ok so it wasn't going to be an evil Santa.

"Thank you Roland. You are a big help." Said Emma.

Emma got up from the table and look around at all of the women sitting around who looked worried. This was incredibly overwhelming for her. She thought about how Killian was right there with her through their last adventure and when she felt like this he was there. He was encouraging her that she could do it. She smiled at the thought of him and all of his encouraging words.

"Granny, would you mind if I checked Killian's room? I'd like to see if there might be any clues. I didn't see anything at my parents this morning. No signs of foul play and there wasn't any sign at my apartment this morning either." She said.

That earned her some looks from Ruby and a few others. Her cheeks flushed after she realized what she just revealed to the group.

"Ruby, Belle? Would you please help organize the ladies and take any information you can about what anyone else might have seen or heard?"

"OK" they said in unison.

"I'm going to go and visit Regina to see if she knows anything about this or if she can help with the identity of the person based on what we know. She managed to make quite a few friends and enemies in the magical world. I wouldn't be surprised if she had something to do with this." Said Emma.

She grabbed her things and left for Regina's.

~~~~~K&E~~~~~

She wasn't sure how Regina would have warded the house so she knocked on the door and waited.

"Miss Swan come in" said Regina.

"Hi, is Henry ok? Is he awake? Does he know what happened yet?" asked Emma.

She could feel the chill coming from Regina. She would clearly not be over what happened at Granny's for a long time but she needed her help.

"He's fine. I've managed to take care of him for 11 years alone. I think he would be ok for one night." She said.

"I wasn't suggesting that you couldn't Regina. I just wasn't sure if you told him and he was upset." Said Emma.

"Henry! Come downstairs please?" called Regina.

"Mom! Are you ok? I heard about all the guys missing. Do you have any clues yet?" asked Henry.

"Well I don't have much to go on and that is why I'm here. I'm hoping that Regina might be able to help me figure out if these clues mean anything." She said.

"OK, what have you found out so far." She asked.

Regina and Henry listened intently.

"I heard from Belle that after their wedding they went back to a little cottage in the deep woods. She woke up to a fight with Rumple and another man. She heard high pitch giggling and she overheard evil witch, lost kingdom, dragon, against his will, sorry friend. Then it was silent and Rumple was missing. Whoever took him had bested him in magic so he must be very powerful."

"Belle and Rumplestiltskin got married!" exclaimed Henry.

Regina's eyebrows went up and her expression changed. She wasn't sure if it was from the information about the fight or the fact that Rumplestiltskin got married.

"Roland was also in the same tent with the merry men that were taken. He was alone and he was frightened when Robin and Marian found him. He saw a man with a white beard and mustache that he said he thought looked like Santa." Said Emma.

Regina once again grimaced at the thought of what Emma could only guess was the fact that Robin and Marian were alone and left Roland with the Merry Men for the night.

She suddenly felt the room get heavy again with the weight of that burden in her chest too.

"Well from what you have told me it sounds like it could be Merlin. He is a very powerful wizard and likely a match for Rumplestiltskin." Said Regina.

"Merlin, the wizard from King Arthur and the Round Table?" asked Emma.

"Wow Merlin is real too?" said Henry.

"Why would Merlin want to take all of the men in town? Did you know him? You didn't do anything to him did you?" Asked Emma.

"No, No Miss Swan I didn't do anything to him. You are always so quick to blame me when things go wrong." Said Regina.

Emma looked at her long and hard and she saw that truth in what Regina was saying. She could always tell when Regina was telling the truth. All she saw in her eyes today was heart break and it was her fault.

"I had to ask, you never know. If you think about it in the past your mother Cora managed to piss off quite a few people too. Not to

mention your secret sister Zelena. Could he have been connected with either of them?" asked Emma.

"I wouldn't know Miss Swan. For 28 years I thought my mother was dead and I didn't even know I had a sister so you can't expect me to know their comings and goings along with all of their associations." She spat.

"Ok OK, I'm just worried and I'm trying to figure this out. "said Emma.

"Have you tried using looking into the mirror Miss Swan?" asked Regina.

Emma hadn't even thought about looking into a portal to find them. She needed to get herself together. She wasn't thinking clearly. She was so clouded with worry and she felt so off having gotten Regina's heartbroken too that she was starting to feel like more of a mess than the Savior.

"Regina that is a good idea; Do you think it will work?" asked Emma.

"Well Miss Swan there is only one way to find out. " Said Regina.

They walked out into the front hall where Regina had a large mirror hanging. She looked into the mirror and closed her eyes to concentrate on Killian. She had to see him. She was more worried than she let on. She had only just realized how much she cared for him, let him in, and now lost him. She needed him. She saw him smile at her, felt his gentle touch against her skin and his tender kisses. She felt the magic bubbling within her and she opened her eyes to the shimmering of the mirror.

She let out a gasp when she saw them.

"What the hell" she said.

They were all sitting around in what appeared to be a large cell. She could see them all just sitting there and it was almost dark. Killian was sitting next to her father and it appeared as though they were plotting in some way based on how intently they were looking at each other. She felt both more scared and relieved at the same time. She could see him but he was captive. She just wanted to reach in and pull him through. Pull them all through. The dwarves looked terrified, well all except Grumpy who looked pissed. Archie looked sad and tired.

Regina looked longingly at Robin who was sitting next to her father too. Listening intently to whatever their discussion was about.

"I wish I could hear what they are saying. Is any of this familiar to you Regina?" She asked.

"It looks like they are locked in a cell but I can assure you its not one that I'm familiar with." She said.

Henry grabbed hold of her arm and watched intently.



"Mom, look what is that?" asked Henry.

The men all appeared to come to attention and stopped talking. The door to the cell was coming open. There he was in all his glory, Merlin. What came in next none of them were prepared to see.

"Do you recognize her?"asked Emma.

Regina shook her head no.

The woman turned as if she could see them and waved. The men all looked in their direction but couldn't see anything.

The mirror went blank. "Son of a bitch" said Emma.

## 6. MMM

Ch6

"Well it appears your women have more talents than I thought." She cackled.

"Indeed" giggled Merlin.

"Let me introduce myself, I'm the Magnificent Marvelous Mad Madam Mim. The greatest sorceress of all the realms. Hahahaha! "she shouted.

The men remained silent as they all took in the odd site that stood in front of them. Mim was an odd sort of woman. She had purple scraggly hair, petite but still shapely and she wore a bright pink dress that was tight fitting. Her eyes were also a very light colored yellow; they almost appeared to glow as she walked in the dimmer lit area of the cell. Aside from her odd coloring she was kind of an average looking woman with a toothy grin and rather large lips that she coated in pink shiny goop.

She began waving hello into the air as if someone were watching. We all looked up to see what she could be looking at but there was nothing to be seen. She walked as if she were putting on a show as she surveyed the room. She took time to give each man a once over. All of the men were smirking as she approached. Happy looked especially unhappy at that moment.

"You there, with the glasses in the back. Stand up!"she shouted.

She was pointing at Dr. Hopper.

"Me?" he said.

"Yes, you Sweety. Let Mama see what you got. Stand up now and give me a little turn." She grinned.

Dr. Hopper stood up and spun around in a small circle slowly.

She walked over and looked him up and down. Much like a cat eyeing a canary in a cage.

"mmm mmm you'll do nicely ." she said.

She swatted Dr. Hopper on the arse and he jumped.

"Sit down, more where that came from later." She said.

She began looking around at all of the men again.

"Merlin, you have outdone yourself with this group. Very good Very good" she bubbled.

"Of Course Mim" he giggled.

"Well boys I'm going to have fun with you while I have you and I'm hoping that I get to keep a few of you for myself. Let's hope the reputation of your women is wrong because I feel like I might have won the lottery with you bunch. Mmm hmmm. Although that little magical mirror display that I just witnessed leads me to believe there is definitely some talent in Storybrooke after all." she smiled licking her lips as she scanned the crowd.

It suddenly dawned on him. Emma used her magic to enchant the mirror to see if she could find them. He felt hope inside. She knew he didn't leave her willingly and she was looking for them.

"Why are we here?" asked David.

"Well I intend to challenge the women of Storybrooke to some contests." She cackled.

"What do you mean contests?" asked Killian.

"Well you see I love a good contest and I've been hearing rumors lately that the women of Storybrooke are very talented indeed. I intend to hold what they deem most precious and dear to their hearts until they either win you back , lose you to me, or owe me a debt. Oh, I love breaking up True Love. That just rings my bell boys. The rest of you lot have been taken for good measure. I can't have you helping them. No, no that just won't do." She cackled.

"Let me get this straight, you intend to challenge the women of Storybrooke in a contest and we are the prize to be won?" said David.

"Yes that is right. I'm mad about games you see. Just ask Merlin. He and I had a round a few months back and here he is now working off his debt to me as my personal minion." She cackled.

Merlin grumbled to himself.

"Isn't that right Mermer?" she prodded and slapped him on the back.

"Yes Mim, that is right." He said. He had a solemn look on his face.

"Are you daft woman?" asked Robin.

"Yes, not all of our women are magical" said David.

"Oh boys â€" tut tut there are many different kinds of contests to be

played. I will challenge the women and allow her to choose the contest that she feels she is best at. I aim to be the best you know and I'm good at many things. Not just the beautiful, horrible, darkest of magic that I love so much." She cackled once again.

"What is to become of our women if they lose the match?" asked Killian

"Why they will certainly be shamed without a doubt and I will hold onto their Love. Each day you are removed from their presence their loss of love will weigh heavier on them and their light will be dimmer and they will become weaker. I will hold onto you until they win the challenge or owe me a debt for your return. " She cackled again.

"You evil witch, what gives you the right to do this?" shouted Killian.

She reached into the air and choked him from afar cutting off his air. Killian gasped as she held him tightly with her magic. Why must all of these witches do this he thought?

"Shut up Pirate, not to worry, not to worry my pretty boy. You should only be worried if you think your lady can't handle the likes of me." She cackled.

He felt the air come back into his lungs and he was free of her magical grip. He reached up and put his hand to his throat to soothe the grip she left present.

"What do you intend to do with us until these contests begin. Do you expect us to just sit her with no food and no light on this dank dungeon floor? The men are hungry and thirsty. We've been here all day. "said David.

"Merlin, you haven't fed these boys? What is wrong with you? Even the worst of evil feeds their pets." She cackled.

Mim waved her hand in the air and the room changed. They were suddenly sitting in what appeared to be a great hall at a large round table. Killian tried to move but he appeared to be glued into the seat by some magical force. On the table were platters of food all around the table and goblets of wine to drink and a place setting for each man.

"Eat up boys, I need you to be well fed for what I have in store for you later. I can't have my new pets going hungry now can I? " She cackled.

She began once again surveying the room full of men and walking around the table. She stopped at Little John's chair.

"Oooh what's your name big boy?" she asked.

"Little John" he replied.

"Oooh I like you. Have you got a woman back in Storybrooke?" she grinned.

She had teeth looked far worse when she smiled under the new light.

Kind of like a crocodile. Poor little John, she was touching him with her long skinny fingers.

"No, no I don't" He whispered. She started playing with his curly hair and twirling it on her bony finger.

"Oh Goodie Goodie for me â€" Come along now let's go have some fun shall we?" she cackled.

"What do you mean, where are we going?" he asked.

Little John tried to stop her from taking him but he was forced to move along with her. Merlin just stood there shaking his head. He appeared to know what was coming. Mim cuddled up to John's side as they walked through the doorway of the large hall leaving them all. John looked back at us mouthing the word help. There was nothing we could do. Robin was struggling to try to release from his seat but we were held and he wasn't able to help his mate. Once they passed through the door it disappeared.

"What the hell was that?" asked Killian.

"Oh Mim likes to play with her pets you see. She loves a contest and she loves to Love if you know what I mean." He giggled.

"Are you saying what I think you're saying Mate? She intends to bed that man?"asked Killian.

"Oh I'd say he has a long night of games in store for him. I can't say exactly what she intends to do but it won't be entirely unpleasant for him." he giggled.

Each of the men shook their heads in silence, eyes rolling in outrage. Killian shuddered at the thought.

"Go ahead and eat gentlemen. I assure you that the food is delicious and that it will do you good. I'm sorry about not feeding you earlier, that woman has got me jumping so much that I often forget if I'm coming or going." He giggled.

"Mate, you have to get us out of here. Our women can help you. You won't have to serve that daft witch" said Killian.

"Oh but she won you see. I must serve her until my debt is paid. " he said.

"Merlin, you are a great wizard from our land. How is it possible that she bested you? I've seen you fight before and you are amazing." said Robin.

"I can't say for certain, all I know is I woke up and my name was signed to a contract and she was standing over me gloating that she won. Since I had no recollection I had to agree to the terms." he said.

"Sounds like cheating was involved Mate, You can't be certain that you owe her a debt. She isn't wrong about our women. They are some of the fiercest, amazing, wonderful, passionate, powerful creatures you will ever meet in your life. " said Killian. He was thinking about Emma but he knew it to be true of many of the women who lived

there.

"Its true, they will fight with everything they have. I know Snow will find me. She is not one to be toyed with and she is a new mother. She is extra motivated right now to get me back since our son is giving her quite a hard time." said David.

"Hmm, what about Rumplestiltskin's wife?" asked Merlin.

Killian looked at him confused. "She's dead mate, long since gone. " said Killian with a pained look on his face.

"No No No No, not that one his new bride. They married last night." Giggled Merlin.

"Belle?" said David.

"Ah yes, that was what he said. I didn't know he meant Belle as in a woman, I thought he was going on about some bell in his shop. Yes, Yes tell me about her." He giggled.

"What of her mate?" said Killian.

"Is she magical too? How could she tame such a beast? He is the Dark one after all. I had to sneak up on him to get him down before I could change him into that dragon. That was only possible because he and I were friends once." giggled Merlin

"Belle is a very kind, smart, and loving woman. She sees the good in people even if they are rotten to the core brother. She doesn't take any crap." Said Grumpy. The he went back to scarfing up his dinner.

"I see, I see so no magic in that one then." He said rubbing his beard.

"What about you there â€" Prince Charming is it? How about your Princess? You mentioned she is a new mother. Is she magical as well?" he asked.

"Snow White is the most amazing archer in our realm. She may be tired but I would bet she could hit any target you presented her with. I think sleep deprivation would also be a strong motivator for her to win me back. My poor wife is exhausted." said David beaming with pride.

Merlin stroked his beard again.

"What about you pirate? What's your name? I know you have quite a beauty waiting for you and she is mighty feisty. Rawr. Bet she is quite the tigress in bed." He growled.

"Watch who you are talking about there pal, that's my daughter." Said David.

Killian looked at David and smiled.

"I assume she has magic since she created the mirror portal to spy on us." He giggled.

"Her name is Emma and she is the most amazing and beautiful person I have ever met both inside and out. I'd follow her to the ends of the world or time. Yes, she is magical. She is the savior. I'd gather she could mop the floor with your Mim if she were here with or without magic. Feisty is not strong enough a word for Emma. " said Killian with a big grin on his face. David smiled brightly, ever the proud father.

Killian's heart warmed when he thought of Emma. He missed her so much already. He didn't want to be in the position where she had to risk herself for him. He was worried about Emma taking on Mim. She always seemed to rush into things when her emotions were involved. He hoped Snow would help her since he couldn't be there himself. He knew Emma had great power within her but he didn't know how she would match against Madam Mim.

Merlin was twirling about and wiggling side to side as if he were celebrating something.

"Good Good, then let's hope she can really beat Mim. That is the chance you boys will need for sure. What about you Robin of Loxley? Do you have a fair maiden waiting for you? Perhaps you have two?" He giggled.

Robin hung his head.

"Come on now, quite the predicament isn't it to have the love of two women and not know what to do." He said.

"Mate, how do you know so much about us and our women?" asked Killian.

"Oh I was there watching from the window last night at the little prince's naming ceremony. I just sat watching you and taking it all in. Especially you there hot lips. "he giggled his eyes darting to Killian.

Killian felt his cheeks warming a bit and he rolled his eyes as he caught David glaring in his direction.

"Now then back to you Robin; I saw you walking up to the party with one woman on your arm. Kissing her and holding her so lovingly. Her smile was bright and happy. Then you enter the party and whoa Marian was waiting for you. Next thing I see is you and your boy embracing Marian and your lady friend standing there devastated."He said. He puffed out his lip and gave him a sad face.

"Her name is Regina. She was the evil Queen in our realm. She is very powerful indeed. In fact it was foretold by the pixie dust that she is my true love." Said Robin

All of the men looked towards Robin in disbelief.

"Mate you know this for sure?" asked Killian.

"Yes Tinkerbell intervened years ago and pixie dust doesn't lie. Regina was too afraid to approach me so we never met. That was some time before I met Marian." He said.

"I'm sorry Mate. Emma and I never meant to hurt you by returning

Marian to our world. She never told us her name or who she was. It was entirely a coincidence." said Killian.

"It wasn't your fault. I would have walked through fire to save Marian. I had no idea how she died the first time and the fact that you saved her life I could never repay you for that. Roland is reunited with his mother the way it should have been all those years ago. That is my only comfort while we are here that Roland is not alone." said Robin.

Killian nodded his head. He knew he scolded Emma for bringing her back but she did the right thing and he could never doubt her for that ever. She would always do the right thing and that scared him sometimes when he knew that the people she would be fighting would not play fair. That was where she needed him. He would go to any length to protect her always.

"Good Good, so she is very powerful then too. Mim will be very pleased at these contests." Giggled Merlin.

"What makes you so sure that Regina will fight for me? I've hurt her in the worst way possible." asked Robin

"Oh, because True Love never leaves the other behind no matter the circumstance. Pixie dust never lies as you said so her heart has now met its match. She will not be able to resist the challenge. From what I have heard of the Evil Queen she doesn't like to lose. " Said Merlin.

"Now you should all eat because we don't know what Mim has in store for you later. It could be something fun or something awful. She does things on a whim you know. "he giggled and then disappeared into a puff of smoke.

"Bloody Magic" hissed Killian.

"What are we going to do brother?" asked Grumpy.

The men realized they were no longer glued to their chairs and could move about the room. At least they had received an upgrade from the dank cell they had been in to a much nicer location. They were still captive to whatever the likes of Mim had in store for them but at least they weren't cold in the dark.

David gathered the men together in a meeting like area of the room. It had couches and a large fireplace roaring in front of them. Killian walked around the room to check to see if there were any other non-magical ways of leaving the room. The room was very large. The center of the hall had the large table that they were magically seated at when they entered. It was surrounded by chairs with red velvet coverings. The room was circular. There were large marble columns that were surrounding the room. All along the walls there were large windows but they were fixed as part of the walls and they appeared to be very thick. The floors were a white marble with golden swirls. It was definitely a palace of some kind but they had no idea where they were. Killian walked over to sit with the other men as he grew more frustrated by being held captive in this cell.

Suddenly a puff of smoke caught everyone's attention. Little John appeared and he had large pink kiss marks all over his face. His

shirt was partially unbuttoned and un-tucked from his pants.

"Little John, Are you alright?" asked Robin.

He just looked at them all with a glazed look in his eyes and shook his head no.

\*\*I'd love some reviews if you have the time. I'm curious to see what you think about this little adventure so far. \*\*

## 7. Revealed

### Ch.7

Emma just stood there staring at herself in the mirror after they faded.

"What happened? How could she know?" asked Emma

"She must be very powerful if she was able to see you spying on them." said Regina.

"Mom, what are we going to do? They were all there. Killian, Grandpa, Robin, Archie, the Dwarves, all of them." said Henry.

"I can try again with the mirror. I wish there was some kind of \*69 option so she couldn't see me spying on them. Maybe she is gone?" said Emma.

Emma tried once more to summon her magic and activate the magic mirror so she could look into their realm. She thought of Killian and how horrible those conditions were. She had to get him back. The mirror flashed again and they watched what was happening.

"Regina is there any way we can hear what they are saying?" asked Emma.

"Normally you can, I'm not sure why it's not working" said Regina.

"Why is Archie twirling mom?" asked Henry

"I don't know kid. Whoa did she just slap him on the butt? asked Emma.

They continued to watch intently looking for any clue.

"Merlin is just sitting there watching all of this. I thought he was a good guy." said Henry.

"He is, maybe he is under some sort of spell?" said Regina.

Emma gasped. The witch had Killian in a magical death grip and she was choking him.

"That bitch is going down" hissed Emma.

He was released but she was not happy. How dare she take everyone that she loved? Those people were her family and now she was pissed.



They watched as the purple haired woman surveyed all of their men. Emma looked over to Regina and she could see she was visibly shaken and intently watching Robin in the mirror.

The witch raised her hand and the cell was empty.

"Whoa what just happened? Where did they go?" asked Emma.

"Try again Miss Swan." Said Regina.

Emma tried to summon her magic again thinking of Killian but the mirror remained held on the dank and dark cell. It was different than last time. It was still showing the image but the men were all gone, vanished. She closed the mirror portal.

"Mom, you said Rumplestiltskin is missing too right?" said Henry.

"Yeah Kid, but why wasn't he there in the room? We saw everyone else but he wasn't there?" said Emma.

"You don't think he had something to do with this do you?" asked Regina.

"No, Belle told me that he had a fight with I'm assuming Merlin and that he vanished. Probably just like what we saw happen in that cell. I'm going to head back to Grannies and talk to Belle. Maybe she knows something about this witch or she can help me with research." Said Emma.

"Henry and I will stay here behind the wards. I'll keep him safe." said Regina.

"But mom I want to help out too." Said Henry.

"Kid this time I need you to stay with Regina. I don't know what I'm up against and she took all the men. We don't know why but you fall into the male bucket so just in case she decides to come back for round 2 you are staying put. Do you understand? I don't want you sneaking out." said Emma.

"Yes Mom, I understand" moaned Henry.

"We know the guys are there, it some kind of enchanted place since we can't hear them through the mirror portal. Belle mentioned Lost Kingdom? Does that ring any bells with you Regina?" asked Emma.

"I'm not sure, I can go through some of the things in my vault. Maybe it's in another realm. Call me if anything happens. I'll call you if I find anything" said Regina.

"Thank you for keeping Henry safe. I'll see you later." said Emma.

She gave Henry a big hug and left for Grannies.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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Emma walked through the door to Grannies and the bell chimed. The women all immediately started talking at once again looking to her for answers.

Ruby whistled loudly and the women quieted down.

"Hi Everyone. Please listen to me very carefully. I don't have much to offer you but I'll tell you what I know." Said Emma.

Emma told the crowd of women about what and who she saw and didn't see in the mirror portal. She told them it was definitely Merlin and that there was also a witch who seemed to be running this little kidnapping mission.

"What about Rumpel?" asked Belle.

"Belle, I didn't see him. I know he must be there because as you mentioned Merlin was there and we did see all of the men disappear." Said Emma.

The bells on the door jingled and in walked Marian, Roland, and Snow carrying her baby brother.

"What about Merlin?" said Marian.

"Merlin is the one responsible for taking the men." Said Emma.

"What? Are you sure? He is a good man. I knew him well." Said Marian.

Emma filled both Snow and Marian in on what happened and what she saw in the mirror portal.

"It couldn't be her, no could it?" said Marian.

"Who?" said Emma.

"Madam Mim" said Marian.

"Is she a witch with purple hair and yellow glowing eyes?" asked Emma

"Yes, Yes she is but I thought she was just a legend. I didn't truly believe she existed. The legend said that she is a witch who likes to use dark magic. She was always dueling with Merlin and trying to win." Said Marian.

"Well it looks like she succeeded because he is with her and doing whatever she tells him. She is running the show and looking at our men like they are tasty morsels" said Emma.

"Oh Emma, you don't think?" said Snow.

"I don't know she did smack Dr. Hopper on the butt after making him twirl" said Emma.

"What? Oh now that just won't do. We have to get them back. Poor Archie." Said Snow.

All of the women stood in silence for a moment. Emma missed Killian at the moment a little more than she could stand. He was the one encouraging her and helping her. She kept feeling that doubt creeping up like always. She needed a break for a few minutes to think. All the talking in Grannies wasn't helping her.

"Granny would it be ok with you if I went up to Killian's room for a minute to check things out?"asked Emma.

"Ok Sheriff let me get you a spare key." Said Granny

"Emma are you alright?" asked Snow.

"Mom, I just need a few minutes to myself to process some of this ok. Dad was ok I saw him sitting with Killian. He looked unharmed." Said Emma.

"Here you go Sheriff" said Granny.

Emma took the key and walked through the diner leaving all of the discussions behind her and headed up to Killian's room.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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His room was very neat, almost as if no one was staying there. He rushed to find her after the curse hit and left his ship the Jolly Roger in the process. His room was simple with a single bed, a dresser and a night stand. There was a mirror over the dresser and lying next to the nightstand was his satchel. She walked over to the bed and flopped down. She snuggled against the pillow. His scent lingered there bringing all those delicious memories from last night rushing back to her. She let out a sigh and closed her eyes. Why can't the savior have just one day off? She thought.

She suddenly felt something strange in the room. Her skin began to crawl a bit and she felt goosebumps raise against her skin. She sat up in the bed and looked around.

"Is someone there?" She whispered.

Then she noticed the mirror. It was a regular mirror but it had a slight iridescent glow about it. She walked over and touched it. It felt like a regular mirror but something was wrong. She waved at it. Could someone be watching her like she had earlier?

"Hello, is someone there?" she called into the mirror.

The mirror shimmered in front. There standing in front of her through the mirror was the witch who kidnapped their loved ones.

"Well, Well you can sense it too I see. Good now we can get down to business." cackled Mim

"Business? What business? Listen you witch, I don't know who you are but you better bring back our friends. What did I ever do to you?" hissed Emma.

"I'm the Marvelous Magnificent Mad Madam Mim. I can turn you and your

friends to dust with a dip of my finger. So don't push me!" She boomed.

"So its true, you aren't just legend. You do exist. "said Emma.

"Oh so my reputation precedes me! Wonderful! Now who might you be my dear? I can see you are magical but I've never seen the likes of you" said Mim

She appeared to be giving Emma the once over. Taking in her surroundings and looking around the room.

"Emma, My name is Emma Swan. Now will you tell me why you have taken our friends and family?" she said.

"Emma, good, good. Now Emma we are going to have a little fun. I am the best! The best at what I do in all things. I've heard rumors lately about the women of your little town Storybrooke and their great abilities. You see I love to play games, have contests, and duel. Most of all I like to Win! I need to squelch these little rumors about you ladies. I can't have anyone thinking I'm not the best. As for your friends and family, let's just say they are in the pot and that you are all in. Just a little reward and a reminder that you should play fair when you deal with me or there will be consequences." Said Mim

"What if we don't want to play?" asked Emma.

"Oh my dear you have no choice you see. The game has already started. No one bests me you see, no one. I can't have you ladies upstaging me. I'm going to prove it by beating all of you. Then I will have quite the trophy room to choose from. Yes quite the trophy room." cackled Mim.

Emma furrowed her brow. She had to be careful how she handled this. She didn't know anything about Mim other than she was crazy. She's dealt with crazy before but there are all kinds of crazy out there and each brand had its own special remedy.

"How do I know they are alright? Since you know I could see. When I looked in they appeared to be in a very dark and dreadful place. I don't like the fact that they are being held as prisoners in your little quest for the best. " Said Emma.

"Oh I can assure you that my pets are now being well cared for and that you have no cause to worry for their welfare. That is unless you lose. Then the game changes you see. While they might be yours to lose now, they will be mine to lose later if I should best you and I don't like to Lose. No No, I like to win." Said Mim.

"I want to see them." Said Emma.

"Ok fair is fair. I'll allow this request. You can see one of them. Let me see who will it be. Ah Yes!" Said Mim.

The air beside Mim shimmered and Killian appeared out of nowhere.

"Killian! " said Emma

"Swan!" said Killian

Mim stood to the side with a big grin on her face taking in what was happening between them.

Emma reached forward to touch the mirror and so did Killian.

"My dears it only lets you see each other. You can't actually touch. It's not that kind of mirror." cackled Mim

"I'm so sorry Love, I didn't mean to leave you." Said Killian.

"I know it's not your fault. Are you ok? Is everyone ok? I saw you all in a cell earlier and she had you by the throat." said Emma.

She started to feel frantic inside. She hated that she couldn't reach through there and help him. She just found her home and now this.

"I knew it. He smiled. Well this daft witch has us trapped in her castle. The conditions are better but she seems to think of us as her next tasty meal and intends to have her way with whomever she chooses." Said Killian.

Emma gasped. "What?"

"Oh my dear boy, I would never impose on any of you in such a way. Just ask your friend Little John. We just had a little fun playing a rousing game of Spin the bottle. Have you heard of it?" She cackled.

Killian looked at her perplexed.

Emma's eyes grew wide at the thought of Mim playing spin the bottle with any of her family or friends, especially under their current conditions.

"How about you don't play anymore games with our men? If I have to tell the women of this town that you are trying to play kissing games with our men you are in for a serious fire storm lady." Said Emma.

"Kissing games!" said Killian

"A little kissing never hurt anyone." said Mim.

She had a huge grin on her face.

"What about Rumplestiltskin? Killian is he with you?" asked Emma.

"Well in a manner of sorts he is yes. The wizard Merlin transformed him into a dragon. He is currently watching guard outside of our cell. He really is kind of a crocodile now." Said Killian with a smirk.

"A dragon?" asked Emma.

"Yes, yes I like dragons don't you?" said Mim.

Mim walked to the door behind her and opened it. Outside sleeping was

a large scaly green dragon. He had a chain around his neck and it was bolted to the wall.

"Voila! There's your Rumpelstiltskin." said Mim.

He was quite menacing but since he was asleep he didn't look as threatening as the previous dragon she faced.

"Ok, ok. I'm not sure Belle is going to be happy about this when I tell her." Said Emma.

"Belle, oh you mean his wife? Yes well she must contain some kind of siren song to be able to tame such a beast. cackled Mim

Mim shut the door and sashayed around the room.

Killian looked intently at Emma and his eyes softened. He noticed what was behind her.

"Swan are you in my room?" he asked.

She felt her cheeks redden a bit. She looked at him and their eyes locked. She smiled.

"Yes", she said.

He smiled back at her knowing that she was thinking of him too.

They reached for each other again.

"Ok Ok, you've seen Romeo long enough. " cackled Mim.

"Swan!" he called.

"Killian!" called Emma.

Her eyes widened and she pounded her fists against the mirror. He was gone in a shimmer.

"I'll be back my dear! Spread the word to your friends and let them know about our contest. We will talk terms and rules later." She cackled and then the mirror shimmered again. She was gone.

"Damn it!"shouted Emma.

The door creaked open.

"Emma what is it? I heard you shouting." asked Snow.

She hurried into the room and came up to hug Emma.

Emma shook her head. She was pissed.

"Mom this is bad, this is very bad. Let's go downstairs so I can tell everyone what has happened. There is a lot to explain and we are all going to have to work together." said Emma.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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When Snow and Emma emerged from the stairwell back into Grannies all of the women stopped talking and looked to see what happened.

"Marian, you were right. It is Mim. She just appeared to me in the mirror upstairs. She has our men and she said we have to win them back." Said Emma.

"What about Rumple?" asked Belle.

"She has him too. She turned him into a dragon and has him chained up and acting as a guard for the room the men are being held captive in." said Emma.

"We have to help him" said Belle.

"I know, I'm not sure what we are up against and right now we have no way to get to them or help them. Belle I need your help. Do you think you can help me research. " said Emma.

"Yes, I'll help you." Said Belle.

"We know that Merlin took Rumple and he was the other voice you heard. He looks like Santa with a white beard and mustache. We know now that it is Mim as Marian thought. We know Rumple is the dragon. The only other piece of this puzzle that you mentioned is the Lost Kingdom. Maybe that is where she is holding them captive." Said Emma.

"Are they alright?" asked Marian.

Snow and the other women looked at Emma patiently waiting for her response.

"Well from what I can see this witch is ridiculously full of herself. She is treating our men like they are toys for her to play with. She said she would keep her hands off but I witnessed her groping Archie and apparently she played a hearty game of spin the bottle with Little John. Killian said he didn't look too pleased about it." Said Emma.

"You talked to Killian?" said Marian.

"Yes, I requested that Mim show me that they were ok. She brought Killian to the room and let me see him. She also showed me Rumple as the dragon guarding the door." Said Emma.

"Can you be sure that they are all ok?" said Marian.

"Killian said they were ok. He hates that they are being held but he told me their accommodations have improved since they were initially locked up in the cell." Said Emma.

"What does this witch want with our men?" asked Red.

"Mim said that she wants to compete with the women in Storybrooke." Said Emma.

"What? What do you mean?" asked Red.

"She said that she likes to play games and duel. She said that she overheard rumors about the amazing women in our town and she wanted a challenge." Said Emma.

"That's right! She likes to duel and compete in challenges. That was one of the things that I heard about her. She would take the prize and hold it ransom in order to ensure that the person she challenged would compete. Gasp! Is that what she has done? She is keeping our men as the prize to win?"asked Marian.

"Yes, she said she captured those that we hold most dear to our hearts and she will hold them as a prize until we win them in a contest of our choosing with her." Said Emma.

"But we don't all know magic? How are we supposed to compete?"asked Marian.

"Well she said she likes to compete at games and contests. She didn't say they had to be magical. I suggest you think of the thing you are best at and challenge her to that." Said Emma.

"Like Archery?" said Snow.

"Yes Mom, you are amazing with a bow. Even when you are sleep deprived I believe you could hit your target." Said Emma.

"I hope you are right. I'd hate to think of your father having to play Spin the bottle with her.", said Snow.

"What happens if we don't win?" said Red.

"I'm not completely sure. When she next pops in or whatever we are supposed to talk about the rules of the contests. I don't believe for a second that she plays fair so we are going to have to be one step ahead of her."said Emma.

"Emma's right . We need to be on top of our game ladies. "said Snow.

"Belle, are you ready? I'd like to find out more information about Mim before she pops in again. I'd also like to figure out how I can stop her from watching us the way she stopped me from seeing our guys. She must have some kind of magical ward. I'll have to go see Regina." Said Emma.

"Come on Emma, let's go to the Library and see what we can find." said Belle

"Emma, I'll call Regina and let her know what happened." said Snow.

"Ok Mom, Thanks. Now that we know what is happening. If you ladies want to go home and get some rest I'll meet you back here in a few hours so we can go over what we have found. "said Emma.

The ladies nodded in agreement.

## 8. Hatching Plans



## Ch 8

Killian shimmered back into the room and landed on the floor in front of the men sitting at the couches by the fireplace.

"Are you alright?" asked David

"Aye, Mate." He said.

He got up and brushed himself off and took his place back on the couch.

"What happened to you?" asked David.

"Well mates it appears that Witch is crazier than we originally thought. She brought me in the room so that Emma could get a look at me and make sure that I was ok. I told her that you were all ok as well. She asked about Rumpel and the Witch confirmed that he is indeed the dragon sleeping outside of the room. She also told Emma that the women of Storybrooke would in fact have to win us back in some contests." Said Killian.

"What? She is serious about that. Did you mention what happened to Little John?" asked David.

Killian looked over at John who still appeared to be a bit catatonic sitting in the corner on a wingback chair.

"The witch said that he played a game called Spin the Bottle with her. Apparently its some sort of kissing game but she didn't force him to bed her. At least that is something. I don't plan to be spinning any sort of bottle with her anytime soon." Said Killian.

"I second that Brother" said Grumpy.

"I'm not sure that it's any less torture that she didn't bed him knowing how many times she put her lips on poor John. Just look at the poor bastard sitting there with all those lip marks still on his face." Said Robin

All of the men looked at him with sympathy in their eyes. Dr. Hopper got up and pulled a napkin and a glass of water from the table. He walked to John and started to clean up the poor man's face.

"Emma told her that if she wanted them to play the game she needed to keep her hands off of us. She didn't want her sampling the prizes so to speak." Smiled Killian.

The men seemed to look a bit relieved. All but John that is since he had already had to go through a bit of torture at her lips already.

"Did Emma say anything else? How are the rest of the women doing? Is Snow ok?" asked David.

"She didn't get to do much talking with the loud mouth witch doing most of it. I think she was just relieved to see me and hear that we were ok. I thought maybe she had been waving towards Emma earlier when she first came into the cell and she was. Emma used mirror magic

to look in on us and see where we were. She can't see us in here though. Once we were taken from the cell Emma lost sight of us. She also couldn't hear us. " said Killian.

"Was Emma ok? I know you were worried." Said David.

"Aye mate. She misses me too. She was in my room when the witch looked in on her." said Killian.

David rolled his eyes at that comment.

Killian smiled brightly at the thought of her in his room. He was happy she was thinking about him as he was thinking about her. He was quickly brought back from that thought.

"Well what happens next? How do we get out of here?" asked Robin

"Well she told Emma that the women would get to choose their contest and that if they won we would be returned. She sent me back here before I could learn anything else." He said.

"Well how do we know if the women are going to play in a contest to win us?" asked Robin.

"I don't know mate. She didn't say anything else. I was sent." said Killian.

Robin shook his head.

Killian looked towards the fireplace. He felt hopeless just sitting there unable to offer any advice to Emma about what was happening.

"I guess we just sit here and wait." Said David

"Aye Mate. That's all we can do unless any of you have magical abilities that they haven't told us about?" said Killian.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

Emma and Belle arrived at the library. Belle unlocked the door and let them inside. Belle lead Emma to the stacks in the back that had all of the books on the other realms.

"Emma I'm going to go and freshen up a bit. I've got extra clothes in the back and I haven't had a chance to change out of these things since my trek through the woods this morning back to town. Will you be alright here alone?" said Belle.

"Yeah, sure go ahead. Are these the books I need?"asked Emma.

"Yes, start with the right side and they are alphabetical." Said Belle.

Emma started going through the books. They were all rich with history on the magical world that she was never a part of. She was sure that if she had been brought up in the palace like she should have been

that these things would have been common knowledge. She still felt so helpless in so many ways when it came to this. She was an amateur at magic and she knew she was going to need it. A few lessons with Regina did not make her a powerful sorceress. She pulled a book from the bottom shelf called Realms. She found the Enchanted Forest and looked to see if there was anything about the Lost Kingdom. She was never that good at this type of research. Chasing bad guys or tracking people down were her thing.

"Did you find anything?" asked Belle.

"I'm not sure. I know that Marian said they both knew Merlin. They were from the Enchanted Forest so they were part of our Realm. What I'm not sure is if the Lost Kingdom is part of the Enchanted Forest or if it is somewhere else. It's not like I can trace David's cell phone and have it tell me where they are." Said Emma.

"True, True but maybe there is some other magical way of locating them? Not necessarily technology. Maybe we could try that locator spell that I've used a few times. I know how to make it. We just need something from one of the men to find them." Said Belle.

"Will that work across realms?" asked Emma.

"I don't know but we could ask Regina." Said Belle.

"Maybe if the object is strong enough to find the owner it would work." said Emma.

It just dawned on her that her parents shared a heart. If that wasn't like a magical GPS she didn't know what else could be. They were magically linked by True Love.

"Belle, I gotta get over to Regina's, do you think you could keep looking in these books to find the Lost Kingdom? I hope they don't call it the Lost kingdom because it really is lost." Said Emma.

"Sure, I'll keep looking. I'll do anything to help get Rumple back." Said Belle.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

Emma walked up to Reginas house for the second time that day. She rang the bell knowing that the wards were in place. Snow answered the door.

"Mom, what are you doing here?" asked Emma.

"Well I remembered you saying that Regina warded the house so I figured that I would just bring Neal here with me instead of calling her. I thought maybe she could use some company after what happened last night." said Snow.

Emma hung her head and took a breath.

"I'm so sorry about that. I never meant to hurt her." said Emma.

"I know honey, believe me I know. You reunited a child with his mother. You know better than anyone how much that means as both a child who lost their parents and a mother who found her son." Said Snow

"Yes, I'll stand by why I did it and wouldn't change a thing about it. I would never have been able to leave that innocent woman there to die. She would have died to protect you. I felt I owed it to her." said Emma.

"Well Robin and Regina have a very deep connection. I'm not sure what will happen but that is something for them to work out now. Regina has changed a lot and I'm hoping this doesn't undo everything she has worked so hard to become. She was actually using Light Magic. That is amazing in itself. That is also one of the reasons I came. I just wanted to remind her of how good she can be. "said Snow.

"OK, where is Neal?" asked Emma.

"He's in the other room with Henry. Regina went to her crypt to see if she could find anything about Mim, Merlin, or the Lost Kingdom. She was surprised when I told her about what Mim wants. You know Regina, she loves a challenge too. She also doesn't like to be threatened. It was as if a fire woke up inside of her. Her eyes lit up and she got the biggest smile on her face." Said Snow.

"Well are you surprised? Regina doesn't like to be threatened. We all know that. Whether she is good or not she isn't going to take this lying down. The question really wasn't would she fight it was who would she be fighting for? We know how she feels about Robin but we also know Robin's wife Marian is here now too. We'll have to see how this game plays out. Thank goodness Henry is safe here. Between Regina and I if Mim even tried to touch him she would be a dust pile before she had a chance to open her mouth." said Emma.

Snow nodded her head in acknowledgement.

"Yes we will have to keep him here safe with Regina."said Snow.

"Mom, is that you?"called Henry

"Hey Kid, yeah I'm in here. Be right in. Did Regina mention when she would be back?" said Emma.

"Not long now" said Snow.

"OK, Belle is looking into this too. I could use a minute to think myself."said Emma.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

"Oh Mermer! Come in here please!"bellowed Mim

Merlin appeared in a shimmer almost immediately.

"Yes Mim, what is it now?"he asked.

"Oh now you know you are at my beck and call. I expect you to be more enthusiastic about our little arrangement when I call you. You are mine until you work off your debt to me. Those were the terms." she said.

She poofed the agreement back into the room.

"See the note right here"she cackled.

Merlin looked at the contract signatures once more. He shook his head. He went to take the agreement from her to take a closer look when she poofed it back out of the room. He needed to get a better look at it. What had he got himself into?

"What is it that I can do for you Madam Mim?" he said as he bowed in front of her.

"Ah that is much better. Now what did you find out about Storybrooke and the women? Do you know who is with whom and do you have any information about their weaknesses?"she asked?

"Well it appears that many of the men are simply being held captive. They are vital to the town but they don't have a True Love waiting for them in Storybrooke."said Merlin.

"I see I see â€" I'll need a list of those boys." She cackled.

"What about the rest of them? I know the Pirate belongs to Emma. What about the one with the Sheriffs badge?"said Mim

"Well that is the Prince and he is married to Snow White. He is Emma's father."said Merlin

"Oh interesting, ok and what about the archer?"said Mim

"That is Robin Hood. His wife is Marian and until recently he thought she was dead. He started a relationship with the Evil Queen Regina."said Merlin

"Two Loves? Oh this will be interesting to see how that will play out. Which will want him more?"she cackled.

"Then there is Dr. Whale. From what I could see there is something of a beginning with a woman named Ruby. I'm not sure what there is to know about her. They just seemed to stare at each other longingly as I observed. He also seems to be a very quiet man." said Merlin.

"Ok and we have a ton of other men, dwarves, and also we have my beautiful Dragon Rumplestiltskin."said Mim.

"Yes, but Rumplestiltskin got married last night and he now has a wife named Belle waiting for him in Storybrooke. She was there at the cottage when I took him."said Merlin.

"Rumple is married? Pity, I hadn't expected that. I am very attracted to the darkness within him. You know I love my dark magic darling. Too bad but she still has to win him back."cackled Mim.

Merlin shook his head in disbelief. How had he ended up in this situation again? He thought.

"All this talk has put me in the mood to play some games. What are the boys doing now? Let's go have a look, shall we?"she said.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

The men were all gathered around the fireplace sitting on the coach when Merlin and Mim appeared in the room through the non-existent door.

"Hello Boys! What are you up to in here?"asked Mim.

None of them wanted to look her in the eye for fear of what she could do. If there was ever a time to need Rumpelstiltskin it was now thought Killian.

"Cat got your tongues?"cackled Mim.

Merlin stood and remained silent next to her. They knew they needed more information and the only way they were going to get it was to sacrifice one of them and get Merlin to hang back and join them for some conversation. The single men drew straws, leaving little John out this time since he had to endure the rounds of play last time.

Killian looked at Happy and gave him the nod.

"Well isn't it lovely to see you again Madam Mim" piped Happy.

"Now, that's more like it Sweetie."said Mim

She walked over to Happy and gave him a once over.

"What's your name?"she asked.

"I'm Happy" said Happy.

"Oh I like you, come on now Honey lets go have some fun. Toodles boys!"called Mim

She grabbed Happy's hand and they disappeared.

They all looked at each other with a bit of relief on their faces. Merlin looked like he was about to leave.

"Mate, would you like to hang out and have a few drinks with us?"asked Killian.

"Well, Mim will be occupied which is a good thing for me so I don't mind if I do." Giggled Merlin.

All of the men sat at the table and opened the wine. They were going to get to the bottom of this Mim if it was the last thing they did. None of them wanted to just lie down and be treated like this. Mim was already breaking the rules by taking Happy and he knew she wasn't going to play fair.

## 9. Location Location Location

### Ch. 9

Emma looked in on the boys. Henry was so good with little Neal. He was smiling and cooing as Henry made silly faces at him. Emma shook her head. All she could think again was stuff like this doesn't happen in New York. She knew that argument has been played out and she was happy to be home with her family but this stuff could really get to her sometimes. She also remembered what it was like to be alone. If she had to choose she would take family every time even with all of this craziness. She needed to be here with them and helping solve this crisis. Nothing would have been worse than getting married to a flying monkey. Thank god he found her. She was where she needed to be. She took a deep breath and brushed her fingers through her hair.

Snow walked up behind her and put her hand on her shoulder. They stood there staring at their children. Henry looked over and smiled. Snow walked over and picked up the baby to relieve Henry so she could feed him.

The door slammed behind them and Regina walked in.

"Well Ms. Swan I think we have trouble on our hands with this one." said Regina.

Emma gave her a solemn look and rolled her eyes.

"What did you find Regina?" asked Emma

"Seems you were right about the company my mother kept. She notes in some of her journals about facing Mim on occasional challenges for fun. Mother both lost and won during her time in Wonderland. I suppose this Mim knows how to realm jump." Said Regina.

"Oh that's not good." said Emma.

Her plan of a snatch and grab mission was going to be highly unlikely if they were not going to be able to get near the castle that the men were being held, especially if it is in another realm. She wasn't aware that a person could realm jump. She only knew that Mermaids could cross realms. She would tuck that information away for later too. Maybe Ariel could help them.

"I brought along some of Cora's journals so that I could read them more thoroughly to see if there might be more information. I haven't found anything about the lost kingdom but there were some notes about the challenges with Mim. We are going to have to beat her at her own game. If she wants to play, we'll play." Said Regina

"What about the fact that she has the rooms shielded wherever they are?" asked Emma.

"Well there are ways around it and since she has an affinity for Dark Magic I'm likely to find something here in my mother's books." said Regina.

"Would you like me to help you look?" asked Emma.

"No, Ms Swan. They are rather personal to me so I would prefer to read these alone." She said.

"OK, If I can help let me know" said Emma.

"I did bring a magic book with me that you should review. We started our lessons but we haven't gotten very far. You might find something in here about her wards. If we can locate them it would be helpful. At least we would be able to find out if we can come up with a back up plan." Said Regina.

Emma groaned. "Its not in Elvish is it?"she asked.

"No, you can read this one" said Regina.

"Oh, that reminds me. Belle and I were talking in the Library about the possibility of locating the men using a spell. Do you know if it could work across realms? " asked Emma.

"The only location device I'm aware of was that globe that Rumplestiltskin used to locate Henry on Neverland." Said Regina.

"That's right! I can ask Belle if she still has it. I had another thought though, would it be possible to use my parents to find them?"asked Emma.

"I'm not sure what you mean?"said Regina

Emma looked at her mother feeding Neal on the couch.

"Well my parents are sharing a heart. There has to be some kind of good that can come from that." Said Emma.

"That is an interesting idea. Both of your parents have also been in the sleeping curse. They may be able to communicate if we get them in a deep sleep. Since they share a heart it could make their connection stronger. It might be worth a try. I don't know of any pair that have shared a heart but your parents certainly are unique." Said Regina.

"God knows I could use a deep sleep. I'm sure your father could as well considering that we have both been up so late." Said Snow.

She yawned and snuggled Neal closer.

"OK well it looks like we are going to have a long night ahead of us trying to find some answers. I'm going to head back to the library to check in with Belle. We'll go by Gold's shop to see if he has the globe. I'll come back here around dinner time. I can pick up a lasagna from Granny's for dinner? I promised the other women in town I would come back in a few hours so I can brief them when I get dinner." said Emma.

"Ok Ms Swan and don't forget to take this magic book with you. You might find it useful." Said Regina.

"Thanks" she said.

She walked over and kissed Henry on top of the head. He was engrossed



in video games with his head phones on being a typical teen. She kissed her Mom on top of the head and her little brother too. They were too precious to lose and she didn't want to miss any more opportunities to let them know she loved them.

Regina retired to her office to review her mother's journals. Emma could see she was still visibly shaken about last night's events but she knew that she would never trust Emma with that information. Hopefully Snow could talk to her. She was honestly happy that Regina didn't slam the door in her face when she showed up earlier. She grabbed her jacket and headed out to find Belle.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

Merlin appeared to be good and drunk. Killian knew how to play that game well. They needed to get information out of this man before Mim came back. She as a loose cannon and no one knew what she could be capable of. Killian gave David a nod as the signal to get this little mission started.

"So Merlin, how long have you known Mim" asked David.

"Well, I've been around so long I can't remember exactly how old I am now but it feels like I've known her longer than I've been alive if that is even possible." He hiccupped.

"Does she often have you do this kind of dirty work?" asked David

"Only when it suits her, those women of yours really got her feathers ruffled. She was happy living her on high in this castle acting like she was the Queen. That is until she popped into the market place one day and heard some people talking about the Charming family and how the infamous Captain Hook seemed to turn Hero and help them escape Neverland."

Killian rolled his eyes at the comment. He heard it from Ariel on their little stint back to the Enchanted Forest but he wasn't aware that rumor was spreading.

"Where exactly is this marketplace mate? I need to keep my reputation in tact and I might need to visit this little place." Said Killian.

He looked at David and winked.

"Oh you know here and there â€" let me think. Hmm Ah yes its near the edge of the Enchanted Forrest." He hiccupped.

David nodded back to Killian.

"Is that close to where we are mate?" asked Killian.

"Yes not too far down the road, Mim doesn't like to keep too far. She just shields her location so that no others can find her. She likes to do the challenging, not to be challenged." He said.

"Here let me fill your glass brother" said Grumpy.

"So whose castle are we actually in right now Mate? If Mim is only playing Queen?" said Killian.

Merlin continued drinking his ale and the others did as well. At least they pretended to keep drinking. The men wanted to keep their wits about them in case Mim wanted to "play". That thought was frightening.

"Oh, I think its Maleficent's castle. I believe she won't be returning anytime soon since she appears to be trapped in Storybrooke from what I have heard. This is really good ale. I'm so glad you asked me to join you. Its been a long time since I've been to a party." giggled Merlin.

"So is it possible that we might get to leave this castle anytime soon or are we trapped here indefinitely?"asked David.

"Don't know, don't know. That will be up to Mim and if your ladies are savvy enough to ask for terms where you can leave to either be a spectator or participate in the games." He hiccupped again.

"So if our women ask for us to be present we will be taken from this castle?" asked Killian

"Yes well Mim likes rules even though she often ignores them herself." "Cheater", he whispered under his breath.

The men gave each other looks of understanding feeling that their mission was accomplished. At least they knew where they were, how they were shielded from magic and that Mim would negotiate the rules of the contest. Now they just needed to be able to get the message back to them.

"Mate, why turn the Dark One into a dragon?"asked Killian.

"Oh he is a formidable foe for Mim. That is certain. She can't compete with his level of dark magic. She may love it and dabbles for sure but the only wizard capable of a greater level than she is the Dark One. Oops don't tell her I said that. " He giggled.

"So you are saying that if Rumpelstiltskin were here he could stop her?" asked David.

"Yes, not to mention that Mim rather likes him. She seemed rather down when she found out he was married. Not that he ever paid much attention to her. She always planned to find a way to get him into her clutches." He said.

Poof " Happy appeared along side Mim. He had a big smile on his face and she had an even larger grimace. Something happened and she was not happy with Happy.

"OK boys, I hate to break up your little party but it seems that Happy here was more of an opponent than he looked. He bested me at Twister and the terms of our agreement were that if he won, he and the dwarves got to go home." She moaned.

The men all looked extremely surprised at this statement. Killian smiled.

The dwarves all stood up and looked at each other with a huge grin. Mim wrinkled her nose.

"Mermer see that these dwarves get back to Storybrooke as per our agreement. Happy you and I will play this Twister again and I will win next time." Said Mim

"Come on boys, join hands would you I'm a little out of it." hiccupped Merlin.

The dwarves disappeared. Things were going better than they hoped. Surely Grumpy and the other dwarves would deliver the message to their women.

"You're safe for the night boys but when the games begin all bets are off. Hi Johnny!" She cackled. Mim turned towards Little John and blew him a kiss and then disappeared.

Little John sat in the corner rocking back and forth. The rest of the men let out a sigh of relief and retreated to the couch to continue their strategy to get out of this place.

## 10. Mysterious Magic

### Ch. 10

Emma walked into the library. She found Belle asleep over some of the open books at a table in the back. She felt for Belle. She knew she had only just gotten Rumple back and their wedding night was supposed to be special. She walked over and brushed Belle's hair aside lightly to try to wake her. Belle woke up startled.

"Emma did you find anything more about Rumple?" she asked.

"No, I'm sorry I didn't find anything more but Regina did have some information that I thought you might be able to help me with." Said Emma.

Belle looked up at her with sadness in her eyes.

"I am just so tired of losing him. I swear I will chain that man to my hip when I get him back" said Belle.

Emma laughed thinking that just might not be a bad idea.

"I'm glad you can make light of this situation. I know how you feel Belle. My heart is aching right now for you and for everyone in this town." Said Emma. She thought most about her own heart breaking too but she didn't want to focus on herself right then.

"What did you find with Regina?" said Belle.

"Well she didn't know anything about the Lost Kingdom but we did talk about ways to find them. Do you remember that Globe that Rumple had to help us find Henry?" asked Emma.

"Yes, he also used it to find Neal when he was in New York. I believe it is some kind of blood magic. You could use it to find your father

if we can find it? What about your mother and father's heart? Did she have any thoughts about them?" asked Belle.

"She thought the idea of them finding each other via their shared heart was interesting but she wasn't sure how that would work. She also thought maybe if they were both in a deep sleep they could find each other in the Netherworld since they had both been under the curse. Kind of like when we were trapped in the Enchanted Forrest and he was here in Storybrooke."said Emma.

Belle shook her head.

"She also mentioned that Mim could realm jump. "said Emma

"Realm jump?"said Belle

"Yes, she has the ability to move between realms with magic. We also know Merlin can do it because that is how he took the men. I wonder how they do it?" said Emma.

"Emma, I've only heard about that in stories. I didn't think any being was magical enough to do that without a portal or a magic bean." Said Belle.

"Well apparently Mim and Merlin have this special talent. I just wish I could control my magic. Regina gave me this book of magic, in English this time. She thought maybe I could find something in it. It was mixed in with her mother's journals. "said Emma.

Emma cracked the book open and the pages all appeared blank.

"Hmm, why isn't there anything in here? Is Regina trying to play a joke on me?"asked Emma.

"Maybe you have to recite some kind of incantation or something to get it to show what's inside?"asked Belle.

Emma paged through the book looking for some kind of clue. She rubbed her fingers across the outside of the books worn leather to see if there was a special hidden button. She rubbed her fingers down the spine of the book and the end of the book nicked her finger.

"Ow, it bit me" said Emma.

The book started to glow a bright purple. Emma and Belle looked at it amazed. Emma sucked on her finger to stop the bleeding. When she opened the book again its pages started to magically fill in with spells, incantations, pictures and diagrams.

"Did Regina mention anything about this? Did she know you had to give the book your blood to open it?"asked Belle.

Emma shook her head in amazement.

"No, she didn't mention anything about it. She just handed it to me matter of fact like it was just any old book. " said Emma.

"Look at these symbols here on the front. I just saw something about this in the book about Merlin I had been reading. It's his name written in runes. Let me show you. "said Belle.

Emma walked over to the table of books to join Belle to learn further about the symbols.

"Belle, you are right. It's the same." said Emma

"Emma it states here that the mystical book of Merlin was lost long ago. It was rumored to be destroyed and suggested it was the only book to describe how to realm jump in existence. It also states that only the worthy will be able to open this book and read it. You have to be pure of heart and have the ability to conjure magic." said Belle.

Emma looked astonished.

"Belle, this could be what we need. Now we just need to figure out how to find them. Maybe we won't have to play the games after all? Let's see if we can find that globe." said Emma.

"It could be a long shot. Rumple made it appear out of thin air the last time I saw him use it. I'll go look in the back room." said Belle.

Emma looked distracted as Belle was talking to her. She kept thumbing through the book and looking at all of the marvelous pictures.

"mmm OK", said Emma.

Emma started at the first page.

\_The holder of this book must be pure of heart with good intentions to be able to see these pages. Congratulations if you have unlocked my mysteries. I welcome you to learn from me what any good wizard needs to know in order to survive the gift of magic. It is indeed easy to succumb to as all magic comes with a price. You must always remember that your intentions must be pure of heart or the consequences could be dire. You are now the owner of this book and it must be protected. Its secrets must be kept from prying eyes. Be well my fellow wizard.\_

\_Yours Merlin\_

Emma couldn't believe it. How is it possible that she could be holding something so rare and valuable? Who was she to wield such power? Then she remembered: I'm the savior! That's who I am. She smiled. Killian would be proud of her for owning her power. She began to thumb through the book. The beginning had some random spells for small things like lighting a candle or moving objects. She thought fondly to the night at Grannies when she and Killian were sitting alone looking for ways to stop Zelena. She was trying to be playful with him and he was so grumpy. Now she knew it was due to Zelena cursing his lips. Emma shook her head.

She skimmed the first few pages and they were familiar as Regina taught her those skills. She came to a chapter on Emotional Magic. She figured this is what she had been doing since it started. It seemed the only time she had conjured any major magic was when her family or someone she loved was in danger. She needed to learn how to control her magic and actually get some good use from it when she wanted to and not when she had to. Dire consequences always seemed to

be when her magic worked best. The last time she used her magic was when she and Killian were trapped in the past. She knew she had to find a way to protect her family. Things like this can't keep happening.

Emma continued to skim through the text to search for anything that could help them against Mim and sadly Merlin.

"Emma I've found it!" called Belle.

Belle came bounding into the room carrying the mysterious globe in her arms.

"Wow that thing is bigger than I remember. "said Emma.

"Well from what I remember you need to prick your finger and then drop the blood onto the globe. It should point out the location of the person you are searching for. Remember to think of your father because it's blood dependant." Said Belle.

"Magic's price appears to be my blood today. "said Emma.

She poked her finger on the tip of the globe and dropped her blood onto the sphere. The map appeared on the globe was familiar to her and Belle.

"That's the Enchanted Forrest but I'm not sure I've ever been to that castle" said Belle.

"Do you think that is the Lost Kingdom?"asked Emma.

Then the women heard a commotion outside. Both of the women ran to the door of the shop to see what was going on. Just outside they saw the town's women huddling around the dwarves. They were returned.

"Where's Emma? I've gotta find her. I have a message for her." shouted Grumpy.

Belle and Emma ran out of the shop in a hurry to get whatever information they could.

## 11. Happy's Happy

### Ch. 11 Happy's Happy

"There you are Sister. I need to talk to you. We cooked up this little scheme and I got some information for you about what is going on."said Grumpy.

"How are you back? How did you escape Mim? Is everyone ok?"asked Emma.

"It was Happy here, he bested Mim in a game of Twister and she had to let us go fair and square. "said Grumpy who was grinning from ear to ear.

He pointed to Happy who was all smiles. He was proud of himself for getting them home safe.

"Everyone was ok when we left, well all except Little John. He had a bit too much fun with Mim during one of her games. "said Grumpy with a smirk.

"Yes, I heard about that. Wait, how is it that Happy was playing games with Mim when I told her to keep her hands off of you?" asked Emma.

"What makes you think she is gonna to play fair?"asked Grumpy.

"Can we take this party to Grannies I'm hungry?"asked Happy.

Everyone cheered and the group started walking towards Grannies.

Emma reached for her phone and called Regina.

"Regina, Change in plans, can you come to Grannies? The Dwarves are back and Belle and I have some new information to share too. "said Emma

Emma closed her phone and put it back in her pocket.

"Belle, let's get our things and get to Grannies. "said Emma.

Belle nodded in agreement.

Emma knew she had to be cautious about telling anyone about the book. She needed to get some alone time and study. She would never be able to beat Mim and Merlin on her own if she didn't practice. They had a shot to get their loved ones back if she could do it but first they needed the information from the dwarves.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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Belle and Emma arrived at Grannies. The room was full of people who wanted to know what happened to the dwarves and the rest of the men in the town. They were all hoping for answers. Marian was sitting in a booth in the back with little Roland silently sleeping with his head on her lap. She was gently brushing his little curls in a steady motion with her fingers lulling him to sleep. She looked exhausted herself. She was surely still so confused about everything in this time. She looked at her and gave her a slight smile.

The bell over the door jingled again calling her attention to Regina, Henry, Snow and her baby brother.

"Mom" called Henry.

Emma hugged Henry and kissed her little brother Neal on the top of his head softly.

"Henry go and sit at the counter to get something to eat. "said Emma.

"Ok" said Henry

"Well let's get this over with I have more reading to do if we are going to find a way to defeat that witch. "said Regina.

"Can I get your attention? I know everyone is anxious to hear what happened. Would you all please quiet down just a bit so that we can all get the information together?"shouted Emma.

The diner quieted immediately.

"Grumpy, Please tell us what happened?"asked Emma.

"The dwarves and I were all hanging out at the Rabbit Hole and the next thing we knew we were waking up in a dungeon of sorts. You know we were taken by Mim and Merlin. We learned that "Sister" is crazy. I felt like she was licking me with her eyes. "said Grumpy

"Yeah she gave us all a good thorough cleaning. Yuk!"said Doc with a shudder.

"We were all clueless as to where we were. After the incident with Little John we knew we were all going to be love snacks to that witch if we just sat there doing nothing. After Hook came back from the meeting with you we came up with a plan to get Merlin to loosen his lips by getting him good and drunk. We needed to distract Mim and Happy won the job of being the bait for the witch and the game was on. When they showed up, Mim was looking for love appetizers again and Happy spoke up and took on the task. "said Grumpy

He high fived Happy. Happy was grinning from ear to ear.

"None of us expected to be sent home or that Happy was going to win the game. While he was keeping Mim occupied we learned that we were in Maleficent's castle in the Enchanted Forest. We were cloaked so no one could see us. She has the rooms warded too so that you can't peek in like you did when we were in the dungeon." Said Grumpy.

"Yeah, we figured that out when we tried to find you later. "said Emma.

"Don't forget to tell her she has to make the terms include that the men should be present at all the contests." said Doc.

"Right, Mim is not a fair player. If you request it she will have to make sure you can see all the men and they can be present at the contests. If you don't request it they won't be able to come. This was straight out of the wizards mouth." Said Grumpy.

"OK ."said Emma.

"What about Rumple?"asked Belle.

"Well Sister, I'm sorry he's a dragon. We did learn that he is powerful enough to beat Mim. Mim has a little thing for him and was disappointed to find out he was married. As long as Rumple is in dragon form he can't intervene. That woman loves Dark Magic. She thought he was the jackpot to be won for sure, since he is the Dark One after all. "said Grumpy.

Belle hung her head and chewed on her lip. Emma rubbed her



shoulder.

"Belle, we'll get him back. "said Emma.

"I know but I still can't help that I miss him. Married one day and already gone. "she said.

"Snow, we told Charming that we would help you with the little prince while you were apart. He is really worried about you. "said Grumpy.

"Thank you, that means so much to me. "said Snow.

Emma could see that taking care of a colicky baby was really taking its toll on her mother. She wanted to be there to help her with Neal but she knew that it was up to her to get their friends and family back. She felt a little relieved to know they would be there for her. She was also happy knowing that the men were being strategic too and that they were at least all being taken care of for now. She wasn't too happy that Mim didn't keep her promise.

Regina, Snow, Belle, and Emma went to take one of the tables in the back of Grannies so that they could talk about what they needed to do and also share the additional information that they learned at Gold's shop.

"The Enchanted Forrest is a big place. If the Castle is cloaked how will we find it even if we can get there?"asked Snow

"Well, earlier when I was with Belle at Gold's shop she found the globe that Rumple used to find Henry in Neverland. I used it to try to find Dad."said Emma.

Snow looked up at her with a loving look at the mention of calling David, Dad.

Belle brought the globe up in front of the women.

Regina and Snow looked closely.

"I know that part of the forest well." said Snow.

"The only problem is that we can't get there without a portal." said Regina with a smirk.

"I guess for the time being the only thing we can do is agree to terms with Mim to get the contests rolling. Maybe when the men are present we can find a way to smuggle them away?"said Emma.

"The other option would be to get Merlin to side with us against her. "said Belle.

"Belle that is a good idea! None of us knows what kind of hold she has on him or why he would do this. "said Emma.

Emma thought about the realm jumping. She needed to be alone and read that book. If she could figure it out, she could surprise them with a third option.

"Yes, I thought Merlin was a good wizard. "said Snow.

"Everything I've read indicates that he is. "said Belle.

"Hey Grumpy! Did you guys find anything out about why Merlin is working for Mim?"called Emma.

"He lost a bet of some kind and is being forced to do her dirty work. He is not too happy about it either. He can't even remember what contest he lost. He said he woke up and his name was signed to the scroll and he was her slave. He was all too happy to drink with us while she was occupied. "said Grumpy

"Oh, that doesn't sound good. "said Snow.

"Yeah, if she can trick a wizard like Merlin what chance do we have. "said Emma.

"Emma, we can do this. Don't give up just yet. We will figure this out. "said Snow.

Snow grabbed Emma's hand and squeezed giving her a little reassuring smile.

"Besides we are all stronger together than apart. We aren't going to let another witch turn this town upside down. "said Belle.

"I know you are all right. I'm just tired. It's been a whirlwind the last few days for me and I've been hoping to get some rest and now we are fighting against some crazy witch who just happened to pop into our town unannounced. "said Emma.

"Don't remind me." said Regina.

"You know she had to have been watching us for some time. She struck when we were all least expecting it. "said Emma.

"That thought creeps me out Emma. "said Snow.

"Regina is there any way we can put a ward on Grannies? I'd like this to be our headquarters while we are going through these contests. I want to be able to make sure that we can strategize without Mim peeking in. It was the strangest feeling to know she was peering in on me whenever she wanted." said Emma.

"Well, it's kind of like what we did at the hospital when your brother was born. If you can assist me outside we can ward the diner and the rooms at the inn just in case. Just remember to keep your magic this time. "said Regina.

"Yeah I get it. "said Emma with a smirk as she shook her head.

Emma could tell Regina was still pissed at her for brining Marian back. That was going to take awhile before there was any kind of friendliness between them again.

"I'd like to have Henry continue to stay with me while this is going on. "said Regina.

"Yeah, that's probably a good idea. We can meet back here for breakfast in the morning and compare notes about what we found. "said

Emma.

She also thought maybe Henry could keep her spirits up in lieu of everything that happened.

"Oh that reminds me, Ms Swan you forgot this earlier. How are you ever going to learn if you don't start studying? You will never win against her black magic if you are not prepared." Said Regina.

She handed Emma a book. Emma looked perplexed. She thumbed through the book and it was incantations and diagrams about magic. Nothing like the book she already had in her bag. The book she thought Regina gave her earlier.

Belle looked at her with a perplexed look on her face as well. Emma shook her head at Belle encouraging her to keep the information to herself. Emma thought maybe they were getting a little more help than they initially thought and she smiled. Maybe Merlin wasn't going to be so hard to turn as they thought. That gave her some hope.

"Uh, yeah. Thanks I can't believe I forgot it."said Emma.

"Henry let's get going. I need to get back."said Regina.

Emma watched Regina give a slight glance to the back of the diner where Marian was sitting when she walked towards the door.

Henry finished his last bite of his burger and grabbed a few fries from his plate.

"Thanks Granny."said Henry.

Emma hugged Henry around the shoulders and they walked through the door.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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With all of the magical wards in place at Grannie's Emma thought it was probably a good thing for her to just stay there. She still had the key for Killian's room that Granny gave her earlier. With Granny's permission she excused herself from the gathering and went up to his room to do some studying and get some rest. Her mind and body started feeling the weight of the day.

She walked in to Killian's room and closed the door behind her. She could feel the magic tingling all around her as the wards were present over the building. It was a small thought but she felt closer to him by staying there. She dropped her belongings on the side of the bed and flopped down. His scent lingered on the pillows. She grabbed the pillow and hugged it tight to herself inhaling his scent and feeling instantly secure. She just wished she could go back to this morning. "Where's a time portal when you need it?"she thought.

Her Mom would have help at home from the dwarves and she knew she needed some time alone to sort through everything that has happened and to practice using her magic. The dwarves were on high alert. They knew how much her father was hurting since he couldn't be there for her mother to help with Neal. They agreed they would take turns

helping Snow with the baby until she could get him back. They thought it would give her the best chance in the contest if she could actually get some rest. It didn't hurt for Neal to have his special Uncles watching over him too. She knew her mom would feel better with their help too. They have been a constant in her life for a long time.

She also knew Ruby would help. Ruby was just as worried about Whale even though she wouldn't say anything to us. Emma could just tell as Ruby looked at them hoping for any bit of information but not letting on she wanted something specific. She had seen them together on a few occasions trying to be discreet. She would make sure to ask about him if she could.

After Regina left she and Belle spent more time reviewing all of the details with the dwarves. She was happy to hear that the men were being well fed and that their accommodations had greatly improved since she saw them through the portal. Belle didn't get much relief since none of the men really got to spend any time with Rumple so she decided to take off and get back to the shop to see if she could find any other clues about Merlin or Mim that could help them. They needed to figure out how to get Rumple back to his true form.

Emma learned that Mim liked to have fun. She saw their men as beautiful play things and that they were under the continuous threat of her demands to play the games.

Happy explained that she liked to set the deal first and that her terms with him were leveled into different things. He got to choose the game but she got to choose who went first. The prize was chosen by each player. They could choose a prize that was really big but the stakes were higher for her too. If they chose smaller prizes for different rounds in the game that would reduce the overall win for something big but if she won it made the "punishment" less too. Happy figured that was what Little John did since he had all those big kiss marks all over his face. Happy decided to go for the big prize in one game. He had to make it interesting for her too since he was asking for he and his brothers to be able to go home. If Happy lost the game he was going to have to do some unspeakable things but he was generally happy anyway so he might have enjoyed them too so he figured he would take the risk. In the end he found that Mim was extremely ticklish so while they were playing Twister he might have "accidentally" brushed against her happy place causing her to tumble to the mat while he achieved right hand on Green. He was proud of himself for that too.

Emma could feel her blood starting to get hotter at the thought of Mim going back on her word already.

"Who is this woman and what gives her the right to mess with them." She said out loud.

Emma would make sure to remember those strategic tips when she negotiated with Mim. She would also remember to ask for the men to be present at the games and let each women negotiate their prize. They could assess the risk they were willing to take for the prize. She didn't want that burden on her head, especially since it could be that both parties suffer as a result of the contest.

She snuggled the pillow a little tighter. Her thoughts going back to

Killian. She smiled when she thought about last night and this morning. He was so gentle with her and she could feel how much he cared about him with each touch. She closed her eyes and thought of his smile and the depth of his blue eyes. His soft lips touching hers and making her melt.

"Gahhh", she screamed into the pillow.

Those thoughts were giving her more fuel to get him back. She sat up and grabbed her bag from the floor next to the bed. She looked into the bedside table to see if she could find a pad of paper and a pen so she could take notes. It looked like Granny had the room stocked so she was in luck. She started by noting all of the negotiation tactics that the dwarves suggested and then she cracked open her book to begin the night of studying.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

"Well Dave, the dwarves have got to be home by now "said Killian.

"Yes, thank goodness we were able to get the information to them.  
"said David

The room looked empty without all those big personalities to fill it. Grumpy was always talking and trying to get the guys riled up.

"Well who knew you could use going home as a prize in her games.  
"said David

"I know that bloody witch has some serious issues. At least we know she didn't molest Happy back there. "said Killian.

"Guys, what are we going to do next?"asked Robin.

"Well we know that the witch wants the ladies to play games with her but we don't know what. Assuming the dwarves were able to get them the message we should expect to be there. "said Killian.

"I guess we just have to sit here and wait it out."said David.

Killian pulled out the rum from his coat pocket and took a swig. He looked at the other guys and offered. None of them took him up on his offer. He recapped the bottle and walked around the room again looking for anything that could help them.

At least Merlin was good for something. He did provide them with valuable information in a nick of time. He knew Mim wouldn't play fair. She already went back on her word the minute she took Happy out of the room. He hoped his Swan would consider favoring her pirate side a bit more during these games.

Emma was a bloody marvel. She never ceased to amaze him. She had taken down stranger foes than this. She slew a dragon for Gods sake. He knew his Swan would come through for them. She had too. This time they were powerless unless they could literally wake the sleeping dragon. For as long as he wanted Rumpelstiltskin gone he hated the

fact that he actually needed his help this time.

They were also stuck in the Enchanted Forrest. Without the ability to travel through realms they were stuck until they were rescued. He silently cursed magic again.

He found a settee in the corner that gave him a view out of sky through the tiny windows that surrounded the top of the room. He plopped down and pulled his feet up. He thought he might be able to get some sleep while he could since things seemed to be rather quiet for the time being.

"Hook, I think I'll join you. "said David.

David came over and joined him on the settee opposite him. He offered him the rum once more but David shook his head.

"Suit yourself Mate "said Killian.

"So, Prince Charles", said David.

"Aye, Emma came up with the name. "said Killian.

"So all of those things you said about Leia were about Emma. "said David.

"Aye, I love her Dave. I would do anything for her. "said Killian.

David smiled.

"She's my little girl and she always will be. Forgive me but I've only just got her back and its hard for me to think about losing her again. "said David.

"I know but you should be aware that I would never take her from her family or even propose to do so. I'm happy to in her world. She amazes me more every day. She is tough but soft. She is kind and sensitive. She makes me want to be a better man. "said Killian.

"You really do love her. "said David.

"Mate, how could you not love her. "said Killian with a smile from ear to ear.

"You don't have to tell me. She's had my heart since the day she was born. "said David.

"Maybe we should all take turns keeping watch. None of us wants to be molested in our sleep. "said Killian.

David laughed.

"You're right. We should take turns keeping watch. "said David.

"I'll keep watch." Said Whale.

"You sure Mate?"asked Killian.

"Yeah I got this. I've spent many a night awake in my day. "said Whale.

"Alright, Goodnight Mates. "said Killian.

"Here's to a better tomorrow. "said David.

Killian closed his eyes and snuggled down into the soft fabric. He let his thoughts wander to his beautiful Swan and her soft skin and sweet lips. He vowed to himself that when they got back he would take her off alone and spend a few days worshipping her. Times like this he thought fondly of his Jolly as it would have been the perfect getaway for both of them. He would trade her again and again if it meant he got to be with Emma. He only hoped she would return his affection for her and that he could win her heart. Having it actually come true even in the circumstances that they are in right now he had that comfort in his heart that she knew she cared for him too. He fell asleep with thoughts of Emma swirling around in his mind.

## 12. Practical Magic and Negotiations

### Ch. 12

Emma woke to a soft rapping at her door. She was snuggling softly against the pillow after an extremely long night of practicing magic. She learned so much that she would hug Merlin if she could right now. She couldn't wait to show Killian some of her new skills.

"Who's there?"she called.

"Emma, it's me. Are you ok in there?"asked Snow.

Emma pushed aside her blanket and got up to go to the door. She managed to get her soft flannel pink and grey pajamas late last night so she could a little more comfortable. She figured she needed to practice popping in and out of the realm she lived in before she tried to cross them. She also grabbed the blanket from her bed that still had Killian's scent deliciously lingering on it. Just one of the little raids she did last night while practicing her new magic skills.

She opened the door and pulled her mom into a hug. Snow shuffled her bag around to get a better grip on the baby carrier. The little prince was snuffling softly against his blanket sleeping. Emma's eyes lit up when she saw him. He was so precious and she couldn't believe he was part of her family. A family that she never thought she would have. She wasn't an only child anymore let alone an orphan. She smiled big at the thought.

"Here Mom let me help you."said Emma.

She took her bags and put them down near the desk while Snow found a nice shady spot to put down Neal's carrier.

"I've decided to hang out with you today. "said Snow.

"Ruby and the Dwarves will be popping in to check on us throughout the day and help wherever needed. They are going to help the rest of the women in town with some of the jobs that are needed. They are in

their glory. Happy was even happier than I've ever seen him. "said Snow with a smile.

"Mom, I have a lot to tell you that I couldn't talk about in front of everyone last night. "said Emma.

Snow looked around the room noticing several mugs of cocoa, trinkets, half burned candles, bowls of different substances, powder, and liquids. The globe that detected her father also sat on the desk in the corner still showing the map of the Enchanted Forest sitting on it.

"Where did all this stuff come from?"asked Snow.

"Mom, I'm going to tell you something that has to remain between us. I don't want anyone else to know. Well, Belle knows because she was with me but no one else can know, especially Regina. "said Emma.

"OK. You're scaring me Emma. Is it something about the men?"said Snow with hesitation.

"Trust me, no, nothing like that. "said Emma.

She walked over to the desk and next to the globe sat Merlin's book. She picked it up still holding her bookmark from last night.

"Mom would you like a cocoa?"asked Emma.

"Sure, I didn't even think let me get you something to eat from downstairs. "said Snow.

"No, I'll get it. "said Emma with a smile.

Emma waved her hand in the air and with a twirl a mug of hot chocolate appeared on the bed side table topped with whipped cream and cinnamon sprinkled on top. Snow looked at her in amazement. She'd seen Emma do magic but it was always in defense.

"Boom! Granny's to Go would be a success." said Emma smiling from ear to ear.

"Ah, that explains all the mugs around the room. "said Snow shaking her head.

"I've been practicing but that isn't the secret. "said Emma.

Snow picked up the mug from the table and took a sip.

"Mmm, this is the real thing. "she said with a smile.

"Mom, do you remember the book that Regina gave me to learn magic yesterday. "said Emma.

"Yes, I remember. You forgot it at her house when you left to look for Belle. Is this how you learned from Regina's book last night?"asked Snow.

"No, that is where the secret comes in. I didn't realize that I forgot Regina's book. When I got to Belle yesterday I had every



intention of pouring over the book. When I reached into my bag and I had a book in it. I thought it was given to me by Regina. The book had a plain cover and was blank. I nicked my finger on the spine of the book trying to see if it was spelled and it magically filled in with all of these amazing lessons. "said Emma.

"But wait, you didn't have the book until after we got to Granny's last night. Regina said you forgot it. "said Snow.

"That's just it! It wasn't Regina's book. It was Merlin's. I believe he is trying to help us and somehow that book appeared in my bag. It belongs to me now. When my blood awoke the book it became mine to own and learn from. It said I needed to be pure of heart and intent in order to use it. Merlin's secrets are very powerful. His book has been lost for a very long time. It can't get into the wrong hands. Mom, the secret to jumping realms is in here. "said Emma. She was actually started to feel excited about learning magic.

"Oh My Emma! That is amazing! I understand why you don't want Regina to find out about it. She is still struggling with the darkness of magic. Last night's events with Robin and Marian are probably not helping. "said Snow.

"Ugh, don't remind me. I'm sure I will never live that down. She has been tight lipped about it since last night but I'm pretty sure that is for Henry's sake. If looks could kill I would have been dead. "said Emma with a slump.

"I know how she can be Emma, more than most as you know. Let's give her a little time and hopefully she will be alright with this." said Snow.

"OK, I'm trying but you know how hard she can make things." Said Emma.

"Tell me more about the book"said Snow.

"It's described in here that Merlin was the first to figure out how to jump between realms without a portal. It's completely documented here, very complex but here. I suspect that somehow Mim got him to teach her although so far it's not been Mim who has entered our realm but Merlin. He was the one who kidnapped all of the Men. "said Emma.

"But Regina said earlier that Cora's journal entry said Mim was a realm jumper. "said Snow.

"Maybe Merlin was with her too? I don't know but it's something we should keep in mind. "said Emma.

"Oh Emma, we might be able to save them after all. "said Snow.

"Oh, I don't know. So far I've only been moving between the spaces here in Storybrooke. Last night I went home and got my pajamas and blanket. I also went to a few other places in the night to gather some supplies for some of the other spells. Which reminds me, I also found a spell to protect us from the Mirror magic. She can't look in on us here at Granny's nor can she listen to us. That is just like she did to Maleficent's Castle. "said Emma with a huge smile on her face.

"I'm so proud of you Emma!"said Snow and she pulled her in to a big hug.

Neal began to stir in his carrier. Snow went to get a bottle from her bag and suddenly realized that she was missing the nipple to the bottle.

"Oh No, Emma I forgot something really important this morning in my haze to get out of the house. "said Snow.

"Oh where is it?"asked Emma.

"At home by the sink in a baggie all ready to go. "said Snow with a sigh.

"Ok, hold on a sec and I'll be right back "said Emma.

Snow went to protest but Emma was gone and then she reappeared a minute later.

"Here you go Mom. The bag must have fallen out because it was by the door and not on the counter so it took me a little longer. "said Emma.

"Emma, thank you. I can't believe you just did that. Having a magical daughter could have more perks than I thought. "said Snow with a smile.

"Well mom the need and intent was pure so I was able to do it. I'm still trying to understand the whole magic comes with a price thing so I'm trying to be cautious about what I do. So don't go asking for three wishes or anything like that. "said Emma with a chuckle.

She took the baggie from Emma and began to prep Neal's bottle since it sounded like his cry was more from hunger than anything else.

"Come here little man "said Snow. She pulled him from his carrier and sat down on the bed.

Emma watched with wide eyes. She loved seeing her mother so happy.

"Mom, I thought of a third option against Mim last night when we were sitting at the table at Granny's. "said Emma.

"Go on. "said Snow.

"Well, if I can figure out how to jump realms we might be able to sneak up on the castle and rescue them. The thing is I will need you to help me figure out where that castle is located in the Enchanted Forrest so that I can magically guide us there. "said Emma.

"Ok, I can do that. "said Snow.

"Mom that will mean you would have to leave Neal behind to help me. "said Emma.

"Oh, I understand now. "said Snow with a sad smile on her

face.

"Well we won't do that unless we have to ok?"said Emma.

"Emma, if it means saving our friends and family I will do whatever is needed to help them. "said Snow.

"I know you would but you have me now and I won't let you risk him if we don't have to. "said Emma.

"Worse comes to worse, I ask Belle to help me. I would need you to explain to her where the castle is and she would guide me. OK?"said Emma.

"Emma, Aren't you worried about Belle knowing this secret since she is married to Rumplestiltskin now? "said Snow.

"Mom, I can trust Belle. She doesn't know what is in the book but she knows about it. It was also documented in a book she was reading that Merlin's lost book was the only book that described Realm Jumping. Besides she holds Rumple's dagger so we know he isn't going to do anything that she wouldn't want . We might need Rumple's help too. The guys said he could defeat Mim. It might make her feel better to be able to help us since she feels like she can't do anything. She is racked with worry right now. "said Emma.

"Ok, but we won't talk about that part of the plan unless we have to and we will continue with our plan to setup the contests with Mim. "said Snow.

"Agreed. I'm going to get a quick shower ok?"said Emma.

"No problem Honey. "said Snow as she continued to feed and rock Neal sitting on the edge of her bed.

Emma waved her hand in the air once more and Snow's rocking chair appeared in her room. Emma giggled as she left the room seeing Snow with a big smile on her face.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

"Rise and Shine Boys!"shrilled Mim. She sauntered into the room with Merlin on her arm.

Killian opened his eyes and peered over at them. The door reappeared in the far wall and Rumplestiltskin the dragon was still guarding outside. He was soundly sleeping. She was wearing another tight pink dress. Her purple hair pulled up tight on top of her head making her face appear even more scrunched up than usual. It seems she is also fond of that shade of pink goop that she likes to slather on her lips because she had on quite a lot today. Her eyes were glowing brightly as she looked around the room.

Killian gave David a little push to rouse him from his sleep. He gathered the new father was still exhausted. The men were quick to pull themselves together and gather in one area of the room. None of them wanted to be singled out from the herd and they agreed that when she was present they should band together.

Merlin looked a little worse for wear today. He probably had a nasty hangover after all that he drank with them last night. Killian smiled slightly at that thought.

"Well boys, today is the day. Let's hope your ladies can get their act together and come up with some good contests. I'm anxious to see how these games will play out. Will their reputations hold up under the pressure?"she cackled.

"How will we know if they have won the contest?"asked David.

Mim was distracted at that question. She was giving Dave the once over with her eyes. They were practically falling out of her head and she was licking at the goop on her lips. Killian felt a bit nauseated that morning after what he was witnessing.

"Well my boy, it will really depend on how savvy of negotiators your women truly are. Let's just hope they ask for you to be there." Said Merlin.

"Mermer, don't go giving them any ideas now ok?"said Mim.

She slapped Merlin on the arse forcing him to yelp and walked over to David.

"So, you're the prince right?"said Mim.

She was walking around David like he was prey caught in her trap.

"Yes, that is right. My "WIFE" is Snow White." Said David.

"hmm, I think I'd like to spar with her. You are quite a prize, cutie!"cackled Mim.

She brushed her hand across David's shoulders.

"Very nice, you are pretty strong. Oh wait what is this?"she asked rubbing her fingers over the badge.

" You are the town Sherriff? I like a man in Uniform. YUM!"cackled Mim.

"Listen Witch you told Emma that you would keep your hands to yourself. Putting your mitts on her father is not going to do you any good when she finds out. "said Killian.

"I'm just having a little fun, what harm is there in that Pirate? Jealous? Don't worry you'll get your turn. "said Mim

Killian huffed.

"I have no reason to be jealous, I'm trying to hold back my nausea if you must know. I've dealt with worse than the likes of you. "said Killian.

"OK, Mim I think it's time for us to make an appearance. "said Merlin.

He was giving Killian a warning glance from behind Mim and grabbed onto her arm pulling her attention back to him.

Killian closed his mouth and bit back the words he had stuck in his throat. He was able to accomplish his mission to get her to leave Dave alone.

"What do you mean make an appearance?"asked David.

"Well boys we need to go to your little town of Storybrooke and meet up with the ladies to set up the rules of the contest. "said Mim.

"Aren't we going to be there too?"asked David.

"Yes, how can we be sure you will be fair?"asked Killian.

"Well, you can't. So let's hope your ladies are smart. Toodles boys!"said Mim.

Merlin shook his head and grabbed her arm.

Poof " they were gone.

"Thanks Hook!"said David.

"Don't mention it Mate. I wouldn't want that bloody serpent putting her claws all over me. Just remember that later if it's me. "said Killian.

"What do we do now?"said Robin.

"We just wait I guess and hope the ladies fair well in the negotiation. "said Killian.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

Emma and Snow were sitting in a booth eating breakfast and waiting for the other ladies to arrive so they could talk about what to do in the contests. Snow was having a hard time keeping her eyes open during their conversation. Neal was softly sleeping in his carrier next to Emma and she was rocking him lightly.

They heard a commotion out on the street. Emma stood up to peek outside and noticed none other than Mim standing in the center of the street. Much like their last encounter with Zelena in that same place.

"Mom, she's here. I need to get out there. "said Emma.

"Emma wait! I'm coming with you. Ruby! Would you please come and sit with Neal? "asked Snow.

"Of course, you two go and get our guys back ok?"said Ruby.

Both Ruby and Granny came over to sit with Neal. He would be safe as long as they stayed inside. Granny had her crossbow at the ready. Neither Mim nor Merlin were getting past the wards she put up or

Granny.

"Ah, there you are Emma. "cackled Mim.

"Where are the guys?"asked Emma.

Merlin was standing next to Mim with a little grin on his face. He winked at Emma and touched his hat tipping it slightly to her in acknowledgement.

"Well, I can assure you they are safely tucked away back at the castle. "said Mim.

"Well I don't believe you. I want them here front and center for the negotiation and at the games. This involves them and they should be a part of it. They should at least know what is happening. "said Emma.

Snow stood firmly next to her daughter shaking her head in acknowledgement of what she was saying.

"Very Well, Mermer can you bring them forward please?"begged Mim.

Merlin huffed at Mim.

"Now now Mermer you do as you're told and everything will be just fine. "said Mim.

"Fine, Mim as you requested. "giggled Merlin.

He winked again at Emma when Mim turned back towards her out of his vision.

The men shimmered into existence. They all had a very confused look on their face. Mim waved her hand in the air and the men were all frozen in place on the street. They were also silenced so their voices couldn't be heard.

"There are you happy now?"cackled Mim.

"What did you do to them?"asked Emma.

"They are all present and accounted for they just can't move or make a sound."said Mim.

She seemed very pleased with herself.

Emma let her eyes wander over towards the men. She felt the air rush out of her chest when she saw Killian looking back at her. God she missed him and was so happy to see his face.

"Yes, Very. Can you give us a moment?. "asked Emma with a smile.

"Mom, are you ok?"she asked.

Snow was standing there silent with a smile on her face and she couldn't take her eyes off of her father who was planted to the street in front of her. She watched her mouth the words "I love you"

to him. God her parents were so cute and disgusting at the same time.

"I don't have all day!"shouted Mim.

Emma and Snow focused back towards her.

"That's better ladies now have you decided. Who's the lucky lady that will be playing first and which of these cuties is her prize?"asked Mim.

She waved her arm in the direction of the men. The rest of the town's women had not arrived in the square yet. It was just Snow and Emma.

"I will!"said Snow.

"Mom", said Emma.

"No, it's alright I got this Emma. "said Snow.

"Great, and I believe the handsome prince is your prize right? He is quite the tasty morsel." Cackled Mim

"Keep your grubby hands off my husband!"shouted Snow.

"Front and center handsome!"called Mim.

David was forced to the street next to them for the negotiation to begin. Snow reached for his hand but energy forced her hand back. David grimaced at what happened. He was sent back to the group with the rest of the men. It seemed to fuel Snow's anger a bit higher as she watched her husband being treated like a puppet. Emma saw the fire being lit as they stood there. Emma smiled. She knew her mother was going to make mincemeat of this witch.

"OK, let's get this going. I have a tired infant waiting for me in there and playing games with you is the last thing I wanted to do today. "said Snow.

David's face fell. He mouthed I'm sorry to her.

Her gaze now locked with Mim in an old fashioned stare down.

"OK Princess, what's your game of choice?"asked Mim.

"Well first things first. I want to make sure that all of the men will be present during this contest. I want them to see the outcome. "said Snow.

"Agreed! I do love an audience and I will need witnesses. "cackled Mim.

"My choice is Archery. "said Snow.

She had a stern look on her face and she kept her lips tight. Emma could see that Snow meant business. She had enough. She was tired and sick of these witches ruining their lives.

"Ok, I enjoy a good game of sport. Lets talk terms shall we?"said

Mim.

"Ok, I want my husband back. What do I have to do to get him?"said Snow.

Emma could see she was avoiding looking David in the eyes. Snow kept up the stare down with Mim. She knew her mother would crack if she had to look in his eyes before this negotiation was done. She gave her hand a squeeze to let her know she was with her.

"OK, if you can shoot an arrow and piece an apple on top of his head you can have him back. Each time you miss I get a kiss. "she giggled Mim.

Snow was fuming now.

"Don't worry I won't miss. I won't let you put your grubby hands on my husband."said Snow.

"Ooh, confident aren't you. The arrow will have its tip dipped in dream shade just so you know. "said Mim.

Snow shuddered at the thought.

Emma gasped covering her mouth with her hand.

"Mim, that hardly seems fair. If you plan on risking my parent's lives, Who is your target? "asked Emma.

"Why Mermer here of course! "She cackled and patted him on the cheek.

"OK, if I miss you plan to kiss my husband, what do I get if you miss?"asked Snow.

"Hmm, what do you want? Asked Mim

"Well I want you to let the town's men go. All of them. "said Snow.

"Of course you do but what fun would that be for me? I'll tell you what. We will have 3 rounds. I can't let all my prizes go in one contest so this is how it will go if you choose to go the advanced route for the game. I'll allow the majority of the men to go with a few exceptions for our contests of certain specimen that I have already picked out to have fun with later if I win." Said Mim as she glanced back over at the men licking her lips.

Mim produced the rules to the proposed contest and presented them to Snow.

\_\*\*Rules to the Archery Tournament with Snow\*\*\_

\_Archer must hit the target, an apple on the top of the head of their loved one. The arrow will be dipped in dreamshade for additional risk.\_

\_\*\*Round 1\*\*\_

\_Snow hits target â€" Gets David \_



\_Mim hits target â€" Choice of a new target from the other men in the group for round 2.\_

\_Snow misses â€" Mim gets a kiss from David\_

\_Mim misses â€" Snow gets another man added\_

\_\*\*Round 2\*\*\_

\_Snow hits the target â€" Gets David + 1 man\_

\_Mim hits target â€" She chooses the next player for the contest rather than letting the women decide who goes next.\_

\_Snow misses â€" Mim gets a kiss from David\_

\_Mim misses â€" Snow gets 2 men\_

\_\*\*Round 3\*\*\_

\_Snow hits the target â€" Gets David +the majority of the town men with the exception of those Mim has chosen to hold onto as prizes for the next games.\_

\_Mim hits the target â€" Snow only gets David + any additional men from the previous rounds that she won.\_

\_Snow misses â€" she loses all \_

\_Mim misses â€" Snow can make one more request at any time during the games.\_

"So what do you say? Are you willing to take the risk?"said Mim.

"Let me get this straight, if I miss all three times what happens to David?"asked Snow.

"Well I keep him of course!"said Mim.

"You keep him!"shouted Snow.

"Well until we schedule the next contest and it will be at my leisure but if you take the big risk and go three rounds with me you get him back and a lot more of them too. "said Mim.

That last bit of the rules made the hair on the back of Emma's neck stand up.

Emma looked up at her father. He was freaking out and you couldn't hear a word coming out of his mouth. He was stuck to the street as if he were glued down. Killian was trying to talk to him. Apparently they could hear each other. Snow wouldn't look at him. The rest of the town's women were finally gathering around. Many of them began to look at Snow with hope in their eyes. Snow kept her eyes down focused on looking at the rules. She didn't want to be deterred by the opinions of others.

Emma could see her father furiously saying "Look at Me" but it was

silent. Emma grabbed Snow's hand again to show her support.

"Ok, I'll agree to the terms but I want the names of the men who will not be included up front. I want the men to be here for the contest and to be able to talk to us while they are here. It's not fair that you have held them as prisoners and then force us to play this game. When I win I want them released immediately." said Snow.

"Well Princess, life isn't fair. I'll let them talk but they are mine until they are won back. Do you understand?" said Mim through gritted teeth.

"Yes, we understand. You understand something, if I find out you are messing with any one of them when we already had a deal that says you don't I'm coming for you. No amount of magic will save you lady. You understand me!" said Emma.

"Of Course! Don't worry it was all in fun." cackled Mim.

Snow shook hands with Mim to seal the deal.

Emma shook her head. The men were suddenly less silent.

"Snow!" shouted David.

Emma hugged her mom tightly to her side. She had tears spilling down her cheeks. She finally looked up at her father who was still stuck to the ground. Mim was walking around the square shaking her butt around and dancing about with a huge grin on her face.

"Mermer come do a celebratory walk around the town with me would you? Boys just stay where you are. You won't be able to move but you can now speak. Woof woof "cackled Mim.

Merlin gave Emma another slight smile and wink before joining arms with Mim again to walk around the town.

"She is a strange woman." said Snow.

Snow and Emma walked over to David who was standing near Killian in the town square. They were still glued to their positions.

"David, I'm sorry. I have to do this. I need to free our people."  
"said Snow.

"Honey, I know and I believe in you. I just want you to know that I wish I was there with you. I'm so sorry about not being there for you and Neal." said David.

"I know, David I know. I will get you back. Don't worry." said Snow.

She was smiling through her tears.

Emma left Snow's side to give them a minute alone to talk alone.

She walked towards Killian.

Each of the other women started to gather in the town square to greet the men. The Dwarves were lined up outside of Granny's as an extra

precaution for Neal since Snow was negotiating with Mim. They wanted to make sure she didn't have any distractions.

The instant they saw each other they were locked into each other's gaze.

"Gods Emma I've missed you. "said Killian.

He wanted to touch her so badly. He wanted to pull her into a deep long kiss and squelch the fire that was burning inside of him at that moment. She was the only person who would be able to give him relief. He reached out his hand to touch her and she did the same holding them up like they did with the mirror with only a hair width keeping them from touching. It appeared as if current were running between their fingers.

"I've missed you too. That was quick thinking on your part to get Merlin to spill his secrets." She said smiling.

"You knew that was me?"he smiled.

"Of course, I knew. That is one of your tactics isn't it? "she purred.

"Swan, you have to be careful with this witch. She doesn't play fair." said Killian.

"I know, Happy and Grumpy informed us about her little game. The fact that they were returned was proof enough of her lie. "said Emma.

He smiled at her as she smiled back at him.

"I will get you back you know. "said Emma.

"I know Swan, I have faith in you. "said Killian.

"Don't go too hard on Merlin ok? He's not a bad guy, just seems like he is in bad circumstances."said Emma.

He gave her a knowing look.

"Yes, I believe he was tricked into this situation with no knowledge as to how he ended up as her slave."said Killian.

"Well, I have reason to believe he is helping us too and I've been practicing magic. A special book that belonged to Merlin just happened to appear in my bag yesterday."she said with a big smile.

He smiled at her and gazed at her with his beautiful blue eyes shining with such pride and adoration.

"Swan, I knew you could do it. She won't know what hit her. I'll have to figure out if there is something we can do to help him. "said Killian.

"I have a lot to tell and show you when its just the two of us. I still have no idea what kind of game to play."said Emma.

"I recommend one you can win and if you don't feel lucky make sure

your dice are loaded."said Killian with a smile.

Emma laughed.

"Whoa, here she comes. I'll be trying to find a way to communicate with you. I'll never stop trying until I get you back. You understand that right?"said Emma.

"How did I get so lucky?"said Killian.

"I'm not sure, maybe the dice were loaded?"she smiled.

"I'd do it all again if in the end you were my prize."He said.

"Do you know if there is a mirror in that room that you guys are staying in at the castle?"asked Emma.

"No, I don't think there is. I've been looking around for any possible way to escape the room. The only opening out of the room is a bloody fireplace. "said Killian.

Emma looked around for Mim to see if she were close. It appeared Merlin had her occupied down the street looking into the shop windows.

Emma dug into her bag and pulled out a compact double sided mirror. This was the way they were able to communicate with Henry to let him know they were in Neverland. She hoped she could make it work. She waved her hand over the mirror reciting the spell in her head. The mirror shimmered lightly.

"What are you doing Swan?"asked Killian.

She broke the mirror in two sliding one half back into her bag and holding the other discreetly in her hand.

"Killian, I need to have contact with you. Come closer so I can slip this into your pocket. We will get a bit of a shock so brace yourself. You saw what happened with my parents. "said Emma.

"Swan then let's make it count" said Killian with a big grin on his face.

They got as close to each other as possible without touching. Then Emma slid her hand around towards his pocket with her hand cupping the mirror. Killian pulled his pocket open so she would be able to drop it in. When everything was lined up Killian pressed his lips to Emma's causing the prickly friction of magic to ignite around them and her hand slipped the mirror into his pocket.

They each jumped a step back and took a breath.

"That was completely worth the pain Swan. "said Killian with a smile.

She shook her head in agreement smiling brightly back at him. She looked back around for Mim to make sure she wasn't coming.

"Just so you know; I spent the night in your room here at Granny's. I missed being close with you. "She said in a whisper.

"Aye, you were the last thoughts in my mind too."He said.

"I'll be here waiting for you, don't do anything stupid ok?"said Emma.

He smiled.

"I've been in tighter scrapes with worse people than Mim" he said.

"I'll try contacting you on the mirror. I'm still not sure how those things work since you will be in another realm. We might not have mirror to mirror coverage. "she smiled.

"I love watching you smile Swan. I'll be looking for you soon."said Killian.

"Come on boys, we'll be back at 3:00 sharp for the games. "shouted Mim.

"Bye Love "he whispered before he disappeared.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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### 13. Magical Secrets and Games

**\*\*POV will change to Snow during the contest.\*\***

**\*\*A/N** " I had a question about Snow forgetting the nipple. She didn't actually forget it but it fell out of her bag. She is feeding the baby herself while she is there but while she will be out Granny will be taking care of baby Neal and he will need to be fed so they are important. It was really more to have Emma demonstrate how she could use magic to be helpful to Snow. Snow packed a bag for her newborn like no other I can assure you. She was very prepared. (From personal experience I did that once and my little newborn would only use one particular nipple that came with my pump if it wasn't from mom. I had to run all the way home to get it and found the little bag by the door on the floor. It just slipped out of my bag. \*\*\*\*  
)\*\*

**\*\*This is a very long chapter! I apologize and I hope you like it. There is a lot of detail in this one with the magical practice, target practice, drunken discussion with Merlin and the contest itself.\*\***

Ch 13

Emma looked over to see Snow walking back into Granny's. She was shaking her head and her fists were clenched. Emma hurried her steps to catch up to her as they were walking in. She grabbed her shoulder lightly to get her attention.

"Mom, are you ok? You did great out there. "said Emma.

"Yes, I'm ok. I just really didn't need this right now. I just want

to enjoy spending time with my newborn son. I'm exhausted and I need to practice shooting today before the contest starts at 3:00."said Snow.

They saw Neal was still sleeping soundly in his carrier next to Ruby. Granny was relieved to see them come in. More of the town's women started piling in Granny's after what just happened in the square. The women wanted to band together for comfort after seeing their loved ones disappear again.

The bell to Granny's rang out again and Marian came through the door.

"Did I miss him? Was he here? Was Robin here? I heard the women outside mention that the men were here." said Marian.

She had little Roland in tow with her as well. He was peering out from behind Marian's cloak. Someone needed to help her with some new clothes.

"Yes, they were here. They will be back for the contest today at 3:00."said Emma.

Marian shook her head and groaned. Ruby walked over to her and ushered her to a booth towards the back of the diner. Emma heard Ruby offering to get her some breakfast.

"Snow, you know Ruby and I can look after the little prince today while you are practicing and during the contest." said Granny.

"Mom, it's warded here and he will be ok. I promise. Nothing will happen to Neal. I'm so proud of you for how you handled that witch. You were amazing. I'll do whatever I can to help you. "Said Emma.

"Grab your brother ok, I'm still shaking. Let's go to your room so we can have a bit of privacy and talk." said Snow.

The women sitting in Granny's all gave them adoring looks as Snow passed. Emma could see they were all grateful for her taking on the task to bring back their loved ones. Her mother smiled sweetly at each of them as she walked by the maze of tables. If she was able to achieve it then they would not have to fight Mim or play games with her themselves. This was just another reason why women like Marian would lay down their lives for Snow. She was always thinking of others even when the risk was great.

When they were safely inside of her room Snow sat on the edge of the bed and put her face in her hands. She sobbed. Emma sat next to her and hugged her tightly.

"Mom, it will be ok. I know it will." said Emma in a soothing tone.

Emma held her until she was all cried out. She seemed to need to just fall apart for a little while. She knew how rough it must be to always put up a brave face for everyone. When she seemed calm Snow picked up the sleeping baby and held him closely in her arms. She sat down in the rocker that Emma brought over for her earlier and began to rock gently.

"Mom, would you like some cocoa or tea?"asked Emma.

"Emma, do you think you could get my bow and the quiver of arrows for me from the house? I want to begin target practice. I guess I'll need a bushel of apples too. Granny might have those downstairs. "said Snow.

Emma could see her going through a mental checklist as her red puffy eyes were looking forward but she wasn't focused on anything special in the room. She could see her mother was over the tears and was now focused on getting her father back.

"Sure Mom. I'll get them right now." said Emma.

"Front hall closet" said Snow.

Emma popped out of the room. She figured she should continue practicing magic whenever she could. She didn't want to lose momentum now that she had some things figured out. She grabbed the bow and quiver of arrows and also an extra blanket for Snow just in case she would need it. She hoped her father would be home that night safe and sound.

She made sure nothing appeared out of order in the house and popped back out.

When she arrived Snow was singing softly to her little brother who was awake and cooing at her. She smiled at the site feeling warmth in her heart for her family.

"Mom, I've got them." said Emma.

Emma put the folded blanket on the bed and put the Bow and arrows by the door.

"Oh, that was quick. Thank you so much."Said Snow.

She could see she was still deep in thought.

"Emma would you go out with me to practice today? I'd like to teach you how to shoot. I always thought it would be something we would do together. Now seems like as good of a time as any, plus it might come in handy. "said Snow.

Snow was whispering in a baby voice to Neal as she was talking to her.

Neal was responding in soft coos and kicking his little feet.

"That sounds like a great idea. Let me run downstairs to get the apples from Granny and then we can make plans to get out in the woods. I'll bring the magic books with me so I can keep practicing too."said Emma.

Emma walked down towards the diner to go ask Granny for the apples. She hadn't spent too much time with her mother since returning from NY. It would be nice for them to catch up and have a little special time together even if the circumstances were not the best reason to do it. She missed the closeness they shared when they were just

roommates.

"Granny, do you have a bushel of apples we could use for target practice?"asked Emma.

"Hold on and I'll check in the back. Your mother is amazing you know. She never stops fighting for us. It's the least I could do to help her. "said Granny.

Emma smiled. She knew Snow was amazing and she had shown Emma strength in so many ways since she met her. It made her feel good to know that she came from amazing people with such a capacity to love. It was such a difference from the loneliness she felt for so long before she came to Storybrooke. She had a place where she belonged now and a family that was worth fighting for. She was home.

"Here you go." said Granny handing the bushel to Emma.

"Thank you Granny. I appreciate you taking care of Neal for us while all of this mess is going on. I know you and Ruby will keep him safe. "said Emma.

"Of course and with the wards being around the diner business is booming. Just bring the little prince down when you are ready to go. "said  
Granny.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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The men returned back to the room with a thud. They could hear Mim and Merlin's muffled voices outside of the room. Killian went to the wall where their voices were strongest to feel around for a way to get out still no door to be seen but there was an intense buzzing sound where the door appeared and disappeared.

"I wish she would give us warning before magically tossing us about. "said Robin while rubbing his arse.

"Mate, I think the door is still here but it's bloody cloaked. "said Killian.

David and Robin came over to check it out.

"Do you hear that? It's humming. "said David.

"Aye, Mate." said Killian.

"Well, we will have to see if we can find a way to get out of here. You saw how the negotiation went today with Snow. Mim is not going to play fair." said Robin.

"Look I trust Snow and I know she can do it. She wouldn't have accepted the deal if she didn't think she could do it. "said David.

"I hope you're right, Mate. We both know what being nicked by dreamshade can do and without Rumplestiltskin you won't have a chance. "said Killian



"Let's hope she can do it for all our sakes. "said Robin.

"We don't know which men Mim will intend to keep. She said that she would allow all of the men to go with the exception of a few." said David.

"Well, I'm fairly certain I'll be staying Mate. "said Killian with a smirk.

"Yeah, you are probably right. She does seem to believe Emma is her main challenger so I doubt you are going anywhere. "said David.

"I wish she would let me go. She hasn't paid any attention to me which is a good thing. "said Robin.

"You just don't want her to choose the woman to fight for you mate. "said Killian.

"Marian has no idea and she is alone. I need to get back to her and explain. I can't even imagine what Regina is thinking right now either. "said Robin.

"You might be safer here mate. "said Killian.

"I'd still take home over this place with Mim even with all of the problems waiting for me. At least I can be home with Roland." said Robin.

The men nodded in agreement. Robin walked over to join the Merry Men near the fireplace.

"What were you and Emma talking about so closely? Don't think I didn't see the sparks." said David raising an eyebrow.

"Oh you know, sweet nothings and all that. "smiled Killian.

David rolled his eyes.

He listened to the wall a little closely to see if Mim and Merlin could still be heard talking outside. It seemed silent but he couldn't be too careful.

"Follow me Mate, I've got something to show you but we must be discrete. I don't want the others to know and I also don't want the magic duo to know anything about this. "said Killian

David and Killian moved to the far corner of the room. The rest of the men were gathered around the dining table eating breakfast, already drinking, or hanging at the fireplace. Seeing their loved ones was too much for most of them, especially after seeing what Snow was going to have to do to win the contest.

"Ok, Hook what do you have to show me? "asked David.

"Do you remember when we were in Neverland and you and I were off in search of the "sextant?"asked Killian.

"How could I forget?" said David.

"Irony that we might need to find that cure again after this day is

out. "said Killian.

"Let's hope it doesn't come to that." said David.

"Regina came up with an idea to let Henry know that we were there to rescue him. The ladies used a spelled compact mirror to communicate with him. It's kind of like your phones. You speak in one half of the compact and they speak in the other. Emma has been practicing magic and she spelled this compact and gave half to me." said Killian.

"Let me see that." said David taking hold of the mirror.

"She slipped it to me when we kissed. She is hoping that we can use this just like they did before but she was uncertain if it would work between realms. "said Killian. He took the mirror back into his possession.

"Let's keep this to ourselves until we know for sure if it will work. I don't want to give the men false hope." said David.

Robin and Killian nodded in agreement. Killian looked into the mirror.

"Well I'm devilishly handsome. I can see that but it doesn't appear to be doing anything else." said Killian with a smile.

He tapped on the glass of the mirror. Nothing seemed to make that mirror any different than any other. He was just about to put it back into his pocket when the mirror started to shimmer just like when the door appeared for their room. Emma's face appeared in the mirror.

"Swan?" said Killian.

He got a huge grin on his face at the sight of her again.

"It worked!"said Emma.

She was grinning ear to ear staring at him.

"It's nice to see you Love. You amaze me." said Killian.

Emma could feel her cheeks get a little burn in them at the compliment.

"Thank you, Are you guys ok?"asked Emma.

"Well Robin's arse is a little worse for wear after that landing and the rest of the men are drinking already but I guess you could say we are ok."said Killian with a smile.

David came in close so he could see her as well and took hold of the mirror.

"Hi, Emma we're fine. Is your mom ok?"asked David.

"David, I'm here too. Emma and I are about to start target practice." said Snow.

"I hope you still love me after leaving you with a colicky infant. I wouldn't want you to miss on purpose." joked David.

"That's not funny David and if you have forgotten if I kill you I kill me too." said Snow.

The gravity of the situation just hit Emma. She hadn't thought about them sharing the heart to live.

"Yeah, uh Dad that isn't funny." said Emma.

"I'm just trying to lighten the mood a little ok. I know she can do it. She can hit targets with her eyes closed." said David.

"I love you David." said Snow.

"I love you too! I know you will win." said David.

"Dad, give the mirror back to Killian ok?" said Emma.

David handed the mirror back to Killian and stood to the side.

"Hello Love, miss me?" said Killian.

"Yes. Listen you have to hide that ok? I don't know if they are listening and I don't want you getting caught with that. I don't know what kind of consequences there would be. I want you to hold onto it just in case we need to be in touch. Tap the glass twice and it will buzz me ok." said Emma.

"Ah, that explains it. I was wondering how this bloody thing would work." said Killian.

"Be safe ok, I'll see you soon!" said Emma.

"Ok Love." said Killian.

He put the mirror back into his pocket when she shimmered out of view and he was looking back at himself grinning from ear to ear. He would gladly succumb to the sparks to kiss her again.

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"Emma, you really are learning. I'm so proud of you." said Snow.

"I can't believe it worked!" said Emma.

"Ok, let's get to work. I've got a witch to beat." said Snow.

They were setup in a field not too far out from the main town. Emma setup the targets in the usual distance for her mother for this type of sport. She also set a few out a bit further and a few closer. She wanted her to be prepared for whatever could happen.

Emma began pouring over the magical texts again as her mother took her aim and blew away the targets. She could hear her mother muttering to herself in hushed words. Snow took aim at each target

hitting the bullseye nearly every time or at least very close to center on those that she missed. It appeared to Emma that the only times she missed was when it appeared she was visibly upset and she was muttering louder than a whisper.

Emma took the apples and put them out on the targets. Snow took aim and hit each apple.

"Great job Mom!" said Emma.

"It was easy, I just kept picturing her face on each one and I can't miss." said Snow through gritted teeth.

"Mom, it's not going to be easy when it's Dad that is your target holder." said Emma.

"I know, but I have to do this Emma. I just have to get him back." said Snow.

She shot and nearly missed the target that time. She needed to help her calm down and this wasn't going to be easy.

"Ok, I'm going to suggest something. I know it's crazy but you need to do it. Just hear me out." said Emma.

"Ok, I'm listening." said Snow.

"I want you to shoot the arrow from the top of my head." said Emma.

"Emma, absolutely not." said Snow shaking her head.

"Mom, if you can hit it with me you can hit it with Dad." said Emma.

Snow shook her head.

"I can pop out of the way if it looks like it's going to hit me. Please let's just try." said Emma.

"OK, Once Emma, just once. I can't even believe I'm going to do this. You're my daughter and I'm shooting at you with a bow and arrow." said Snow.

"Yes, and you'll be shooting at Dad later today. Just don't hit me ok?" smiled Emma.

"OK" said Snow with a smile.

Emma moved out into position at the game length for the target. She placed the apple on top of her head and stood still to allow her mother to focus. She watched as Snow put the arrow into position and pulled back to line up the shot. She looked her mother in the eye, smiled and kept still.

"Now" said Snow.

Emma braced herself for impact and closed her eyes. Before she knew it the apple was on the ground and was pierced by the arrow.

"You did it!"said Emma.

She ran back over to her mother who was visibly shaken by the shot and hugged her. Snow let out a breath she was holding at the impact of Emma's hug.

"I did it!"said Snow.

"Ok, now it's my turn. Are you still going to show me how to shoot that thing or what?"said Emma.

Emma and Snow spent the next hour practicing shooting targets. Emma was pretty good for only learning that day. She was not as good as Snow but she could hit the targets and she did well with some of the apples too.

"With a little practice Emma you could be just as good as me. "said Snow.

"I'm so glad we had this time together today. "said Emma.

"Well at least one good thing came from this mess." said Snow.

"Let's get back to town so you can get some rest and I can keep studying. I brought your blanket from home so that you can take a nap. It helped me last night to have my own when I missed Killian." said Emma.

"You two have gotten pretty close." said Snow.

"Yes, we have. "said Emma with a huge grin on her face.

"Don't think I didn't literally notice the sparks flying between you two earlier. "said Snow with a smile.

"Well I had to cause a bit of a distraction for the mirror but I would risk it again just because." said Emma grinning from ear to ear.

"Ok, let's get back and check on your brother. I hope he hasn't been too much trouble for Granny. "said Snow.

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As they entered into the diner Snow immediately scooped up Neal from Granny's arms. It appeared she was happy for the relief. Snow was holding him up and talking to him in her sweet baby voice as he cooed at the sight of his mother.

"Emma I'm going to take Neal upstairs and rest for awhile." said Snow.

"Ok Mom, do you need anything else?"asked Emma.

Emma went over and hugged Snow.

"No, I'll be ok." said Snow.

Snow cuddled Neal closely as she walked through the diner.

Emma looked over the diner and found there weren't too many people there at that time of the day. She took up a booth towards the back and pulled out her book. She needed to get some quality time in with it before they were to face Mim again. She wanted to be prepared for any tricks that witch could pull on them. She was still amazed that Merlin was able to get her the book in the first place. She brushed her hands over the embossed lettering on the front before thumbing open the pages to her book mark. She wanted to be sure that she read every word at least once although she knew she would revisit it many times until she knew everything in it. She decided to embrace her magic the minute she realized home was with her family, Killian, and the people of StoryBrooke. She wouldn't let anyone harm them. She grew to care so much for those people, her people.

Last night she practiced moving between the spaces to magically transport her wherever she was thinking. She learned she had to be very specific about where she wanted to go or the particular space she entered might not be exactly where she wanted to be. She learned it the hard way when she ended up in the freezer in the back of Granny's. That was a very cold and tight space.

She also practiced conjuring things like the cocoa. She had to be very specific about what it was she wanted. The object would also have to move between the spaces to glimmer into existence. She failed a few times bringing cold cocoa, scorching hot orange juice, cocoa in a tall glass, and the worst coffee grounds in a cup when she was too tired to keep going. She had to keep her emotions in check as she did it. When her emotions were off the trick failed.

She felt a lot stronger with her magic than she ever had before. She was happy she was able to practice on her own and didn't have to rely on Regina or Rumplestiltskin to show her. She hated having to owe either of them anything. She survived on her own for so long that it was instinctive to be cautious of the motives of others.

She reviewed the page and finally discovered the chapter on **\*\*Realm Jumping\*\***. She brushed her finger over each word to make sure that she not only remembered seeing it but how it felt on the page when she read it. Her friends may depend on her later to know it completely. She didn't want to take any chance of getting it wrong. It appeared to be a lot like moving between the spaces in her realm but there was an added risk in moving between the spaces and time. She would also have to summon powerful magic within herself to make it work. That is why a novice would never be able to do this. She had been through the portal before and remembered the feeling of her body being taken.

She would also have to be familiar with the place she planned to go or have a deep connection to the heart of a person she was going to see. She closed her eyes. She wanted to imprint that last bit in her mind. She thought of Killian and her connection to him. She hoped their connection would have the strength she needed just in case things went horribly wrong.

She also thought of her mother. One thing she did know was that her mother and father shared a heart. There would be no way they could get it wrong if Snow was with her and her father was in the place

they were going.

She could take others with her on her trip as long as she had physical contact with the person she was traveling with. That could explain why Mim always had her hands on Merlin. It could also be that she was a horny witch and just couldn't help herself.

In the future she would need to make sure that if she needed to visit another realm that she took a partner who knew where they were going or had a connection to the place they were going. In her mind Killian was the perfect companion. He spent 300 years learning the realms and traveling. He would be a fun partner to have for her journey if she decided to travel and learn more about her magic in the future. She was getting ahead of herself. She needed to concentrate on beating Mim so that those dreams of a future could happen. Her threat was very real and without defeating her one way or another that future was in danger.

It was 2:00 and they had one hour before the contest was set to start. She hadn't seen Regina or Belle all day. She knew they were looking for clues too but she likely missed seeing them while she was with Snow practicing.

Ruby was standing at the counter staring out the window. She appeared to have been wiping the same spot for the last 15 minutes.

"Ruby are you ok?"asked Emma.

She was startled by her presence.

"Oh, hey Emma. Yes I'm ok. I'm just worried, you know about the guys."  
said Ruby.

"Oh, anyone in particular? Maybe Whale?"asked Emma.

Her face looked a bit flushed but she shook her head.

"No, he and I are just friends." said Ruby.

"OK but I did see him earlier with the rest of the men. He was ok and so far Mim has managed to keep her claws off of him." said  
Emma.

Ruby smiled.

"That's good to know. I heard about Archie. I hope that woman can leave these respectable men alone." said Ruby.

She went back to cleaning the counter.

Emma wandered up to her mother to check on her. She and her baby brother were sleeping soundly. She hated to wake her but it was almost time and she was sure she would like to get ready for the contest. She also wanted to try something before the games were to begin. She touched her mother's shoulder lightly to rouse her.

"Mom, time to wake up." said Emma softly so she didn't wake Neal.

"Emma, is everything alright?"she whispered. She looked at her

through tired eyes.

"I know the risk you are taking today for both of you. I don't want you to worry. I will make sure Neal is ok and he will be safe and sound." said Emma.

"I know you will. This won't be easy but I will do it and I will win. I know it. There is no way I can lose. I've gone through too much not to win." said Snow.

"Would you like to try to see Dad once more before the contest?"asked Emma.

"OK, Let's try the mirror." said Emma.

She pulled the mirror from her pocket and tapped on the glass.

Killian felt the mirror vibrate in his coat pocket. He looked around the room and found that most of the men were distracted. He nodded at David across the room and he came over.

"Swan?"asked Killian with a smile.

"Yes, is the coast clear? Asked Emma.

"Yes, we haven't seen either of them since we returned. I bet that bloody witch is out in the woods practicing." said Killian.

"Can you get my Father please?"asked Emma.

"Emma, I'm here."said David.

"David, Are you ok?"asked Snow.

"I miss you. Are you feeling ok?"asked David.

"Well you would be proud of our children today. Neal has been sleeping soundly all day and was very good for Granny when the whole negotiation was going on. Emma learned to shoot with me today. She did great. She was almost as good as her me." said Snow proudly.

Emma was smiling in the corner trying to give her mother some privacy.

"I always knew she would be. She seems to be a natural. I hope I get the chance to practice sword fighting with her." said David smiling.

"Of course you will and you will with Neal too." said Snow.

"I love you so much."said David.

"I will get you back David. We've been in worse places than this. Oh here look."said Snow.

She took the mirror and focused it towards Neal. He was snuffling softly in his baby blanket sleeping on the bed.



"I just wanted to show you proof that he could actually sleep." said Snow silently laughing.

"Please relax, you can do this ok. I believe in you. I'll have you in my arms before you know it." said David.

"Mate someone is coming" said Killian.

"Gotta go" said David.

"David, I love you." said Snow a tear sliding down her cheek after he disappeared from view.

"Mom, it's going to be ok. You get ready and I'll stay here with Neal." said Emma.

Emma lay on the bed next to her brother and closed her eyes. It wouldn't hurt while she waited.

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He gave the mirror back to Killian and he stuffed it into his pocket before the door shimmered into existence again. It was Merlin and he could still see the sleeping dragon outside of the room.

"Boys its almost game time." he giggled.

Killian rolled his eyes and he heard a significant number of the men groaning.

"Mim has been out using me for target practice all day. That woman will literally be the death of me. What have you boys got to drink in here?"said Merlin.

He was scrounging around on the table and drinking from the various glasses that lined the table.

"You think it's wise to get drunk Mate?"asked Killian.

Several of the other men were passed out about the room from their earlier drinking excursion. They were trying to drink away their feelings and it appeared to have worked. Dr. Whale still sat alone in front of the fireplace and he looked lost in thought.

"I suppose not but if I'm going to die today I want to go out on my own terms." said Merlin.

He grabbed a pint glass, filled it up and started to chug.

"Mate, are you sure you have to do this with the witch?"asked Killian.

"Isn't there anything we can do to help you?"asked David.

"I don't think so because as long as my name is signed at the bottom of that contract and I haven't worked off my debt I must do her bidding." said Merlin.

He wasn't giggling at that moment. He looked very serious and it was rather sad. Merlin was chugging down another pint at the speed of light.

"Mmm good stuff" said Merlin.

"How is Rumpelstiltskin?"asked David.

"Oh my boy he is fine, just sleeping soundly in the hall. He would only wake up if he were roused with the scent of a Snow Lily. You can only find them in the garden on the North side of the castle. There are but 6 blooms this year and one that I'm keeping safe with me right here in my pocket for an emergency."He giggled.

"I thought you said he was keeping our room guard Mate? If he can only be awoken with the Snow Lily how will he stop us from escaping?"asked Killian.

Merlin downed another pint. Killian was amazed at the speed in which this man drank.

"Well, you see I would just need to rouse him with the Snow Lily and besides the castle can only be entered by jumping between realms. If you haven't noticed I'm not exactly unarmed my boy. That door really doesn't do much of anything accept keep you corralled in one room. We can't have you walking about the castle and getting into things now. Can we?"giggled Merlin.

"So you are really just keeping the beast dormant while the contests are going on so he doesn't obliterate you all?"asked Killian.

Merlin downed another pint.

"Yes, that is right my boy. He's a nasty beast and I'm not too happy about getting on his bad side." giggled Merlin.

"I know what you mean Mate." said Killian holding up his hook.

"Ah yes, you've tangled with him before." said Merlin.

He would certainly have to tell Swan about this.

"What about the wards on the castle?"asked David.

"Why can't they see us through the mirror?"asked Killian.

"Well, it's just a simple spell really. We just warded your room and they can't snoop on you. It's really to weaken the ladies you see. If they think you are in danger they will be on edge." said Merlin.

"That's not really fair mate." said Killian.

"Well like I said, I must do her bidding whether I like it or not." said Merlin.

He downed yet another pint. He leaned in very closely to David and Killian.

"You know your girl Emma is very powerful. She was able to open my

book. I felt her pull. I just knew she would be able to do it. I haven't seen anyone with such power in a very long time. True Love can bring forth the most amazing magic you know."He giggled.

"What do you mean your book?"asked David.

Killian looked at David with wide eyes.

"Well you see I have a magical journal that most thought it was lost for centuries but I just held it my own possession waiting for the right one to cross my path and become my new apprentice. I've dropped that book in many a bag but she was the first to unlock it in a long time."said Merlin.

"Apprentice? What does that entail Mate?"said Killian.

"You know pupil, student, one who learns from another?"giggled Merlin.

"You mean to take on Emma as an apprentice of magic?"said David.

"Oh yes she is quite powerful but I already said that. Don't tell Mim. No, no don't tell the witch. "giggled Merlin.

"Not a word will pass from our lips about this. "said Killian.

He felt a sudden surge of pride warm his heart. His Swan was so powerful that even Merlin was amazed by her. She is quite a marvel and she managed to capture and tame his battered heart.

"Hook? Did you hear me?"asked David.

"Oh what? No Mate. "said Killian.

"Keep what he said to yourself. It could put Emma in grave danger if anyone were to find out what he just told us."Said David

"I would never dream of it Mate. Her safety is of the utmost importance to me. "said Killian.

Merlin put down another pint. He looked positively plastered.

"Mate, are you sure you should be drinking so much? The witch is going to be shooting arrows off of your head? Said Killian.

"Yes, won't you have to stand your ground and be still?"asked David.

"Let's just say that I need the buzz to be able to handle this match and that maybe it's to your advantage that I can't stand still. "he giggled.

Killian smiled and looked to David who also had a huge grin on his face. Maybe he wasn't so bad after all. Emma did mention something earlier about finding a way to save him. He was going to have to try a little harder to get a look at that contract.

"Oh Boys!"bellowed Mim from the hall.

Killian rolled his eyes. David pulled himself up from the bench and

the rest of the men started rousing the sleepers, and the drunks. They all band together again in the center of the room to form a united front against her.

Mim sauntered towards the door patting Rumpel the dragon on the head as she came through the door.

"Soon my dear" she said as she walked past him.

She appeared to have applied several levels of pink goop to her lips for the occasion. His stomach was rolling at the thought of her coming near him. By the looks of the other men they seemed to share the same sentiment.

"Where's my prince? Oh Prince Charming come out come out wherever you are!"she yelled.

David was standing front and center with his lips in a tight line arms crossed in front of him.

"Ooh there you are my prize. Not too long and you shall be mine.  
"cackled Mim.

David did his best not to say anything. Killian could see that David was struggling but he held his princely composure and just stood there. It appeared Mim was undressing him with her eyes as she looked David up and down. She fluffed her hair and tossed it back over her shoulder. Not that it would do any good for the mop but she seemed pleased with herself.

"Mermer, it's time for us to go. Have you gone and gotten yourself drunk again?"What am I going to do with you if you keep getting yourself into this state? Come now I need you to take us back to Storybrooke for the games." whined Mim.

"Huuuumf Ooooh Yes, let's get this ooover with." he hiccupped while slurring his words.

He stumbled up to his feet from the table and toppled to the ground. Killian bent to help him get up.

"Are you alright Mate?"asked Killian gripping Merlin's elbow and helping him stand upright.

"Yes my boy" he whispered with a wink and patted Killian on the back.

Mim was standing there rolling her eyes and tapping her foot.

"Come on Mermer don't dawdle we can't be late." said Mim.

With a shimmer they were all gone only minutes later they appeared in the town square. Once again they were glued to the ground beneath them.

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When Snow was ready they all went down to the diner to greet the rest of the women who were waiting for the contest to begin and hoped to

catch a glimpse of their loved ones. Regina arrived with Henry just as they entered the room.

"Mom!" called Henry.

"Hey Kid!" called Emma.

He ran up for a big hug.

"Listen as tempting as it is for you please stay in here with Granny and watch over Neal ok?" said Emma.

"I really want to see Grandma shoot at Gramps" said Henry.

"I know but it's too dangerous and we don't know what we are dealing with. Better safe, than sorry." said Emma giving him a kiss on top of his head.

"Ok" said Henry with a groan.

"Ms. Swan were you able to practice last night?" asked Regina.

"Yes, I'm learning." smiled Emma.

"Good. I heard there was a bit of a commotion this morning when they entered the town." said Regina.

"Yes, we expected you would be here?" questioned Emma.

She could see Regina's eyes go towards Marian and Roland in the front booth.

"Well I was up late last night pouring through my mother's journals looking for clues." said Regina.

"Did you find anything?" asked Emma.

"We'll talk about that later Ms. Swan. I'll meet you here later. I noticed the wards were a lot stronger today." said Regina.

"Yes, I .. " said Emma.

A commotion began in the square. The men appeared as well as Mim. Emma looked to find her mother.

"Mom, are you ok?" asked Emma.

She touched her shoulder lightly. She watched her mother kiss Neal and cover him with his blanket.

"Yes, I'm ok." said Snow.

Emma could see she really wasn't and had put up a façade.

"Granny, Neal's bottles are here in the bag along with diapers, and all other essentials." said Snow.

"Don't worry. I will take good care of him. Now go out there and win. We'll be waiting." said Granny.

"Ladies, I can't tell you to stay away from the square. I know Mim is dangerous. If you come out to the square it will be at your own risk." said Snow.

"Yes, if you are afraid please stay here in Granny's. She won't be able to enter and neither will Merlin." said Emma.

Some of the women stayed in their seats and scooted close to the windows so they could watch.

Ruby looped her arm through Snow's arm to lead her to the door to head out into the square.

"We'll be back soon Henry." said Emma rushing through the door.

He waved to her as she was leaving and crept up into the front booth with Roland to keep him company. Granny brought Neal up too and sat in with all of the boys.

The rest of the women who wanted to be in the square were already walking out to meet their loved ones. Emma looked around and saw Regina cautiously approaching. Marian was already standing in front of Robin. Ruby was holding onto Snow's arm and they were standing in front of her father. Killian was standing next to him and looking at her smiling as she approached. Her mother had tears in her eyes.

"Mom, are you ok?" asked Emma.

"Yes, you don't have to keep asking me. Its hormones dear, I can't help it. That witch is going down." said Snow.

"Why can't we hear the men?" asked Snow.

"Yes, that was part of our deal. They should not be silenced." said Emma.

"Mermer, the silence spell is up again. Could you be a dear and remove that?" whined Mim.

"Yeeeesss Mim." he drawled out with a hiccup.

He waved his hand in the air and their voices could be heard but most remained silent so they could hear what was happening.

"Is he drunk?" asked Emma.

Mim rolled her eyes.

"Yes, he was downing pints like nothing I have ever seen before we got here." said Killian.

Emma shook her head.

Snow looked brave with her arrows slung across her back and her bow hanging around her arm.

"Snow White, Are you ready to play?" asked Mim.

Mim had this giant smirk on her face. She appeared to already be

gloating and she hadn't even won yet.

"There is a little matter of the men who will be omitted that we need to discuss. Do I also need to tell you that no cheating or magic should be added to the rules." asked Snow.

"Yes and you better mean it because we both know that you aren't exactly good at keeping your word. The dwarves were proof of that." said Emma.

"Yes, I remember and yes to both. I just can't wait to kiss those luscious Princely lips." cackled Mim.

Emma thought Snow would burn a hole in Mim's head with the way she was looking at her.

"Not so fast hot lips. She has to miss first, those are the rules." said Emma.

Emma looked up to see Killian smiling at her. She felt her tummy flutter at just a look. She smiled back and then focused her attention back to her mother and Mim.

"Ok, and which of the men are going to have to remain if I win the full challenge?" asked Snow.

"Well let's see, the pirate, the thief and his merry fellows, the doctors, and of course the dragon." cackled Mim.

The crowd gasped.

"You'll let everyone else go?" asked Snow.

"Yes, that's right, everyone else. Emma has seen to it that I can't have any fun so why keep all these pets at once." said Mim.

"Nooo. You can't keep Robin. I've just got him back." shouted Marian.

"Dear you'll get your chance to save him. Don't worry. If it's not you perhaps it's another?" cackled Mim.

Mim was looking directly at Regina with that remark and she did not look pleased. She kept her lips tight. Robin looked in her direction and Regina averted his gaze. Marian was following his eye contact and looked a bit confused by her comment.

"Regina?" asked Emma.

"Ms. Swan just tend to your mother. I'm going back into Granny's with Henry. I'll see you later." said Regina.

Emma felt bad about what happened with Regina and Robin. Regina was always so excited for a fight. It was unlike her to back away but she knew that she was trying to be kind to Robin by keeping this to herself.

"What about Rumple? Why isn't he here with the rest of the men?" asked Belle.

She appeared from behind the crowd of women gathered in the street.

"Not to worry dear. He's sleeping peacefully at my castle. I can't have him interfering in game play." said Mim.

"It's not fair; I can't see he is ok. He's my husband and you have no right to take him from me." said Belle.

"OOh you are a little spit fire aren't you. Now I see how you might have been able to tame that beast." cackled Mim.

"I'll show you spitfire, just let me get my hands on you. "said Belle running towards her.

Emma had to hold her back from charging her. Mim had the dreamshade dipped arrows on the ground next to her.

"Mermer, we got a live one over here. "said Mim.

Merlin was lying on the ground in front of the men tucked into the fetal position snoring.

"What? What? "said Merlin.

"I said we got a live one over here. Take care of her would you. I'm ready to play. "said Mim in a rather stern voice.

Merlin waved his hand. Belle went still in her place. She appeared to be frozen in place just like the men but her voice was also silenced. She looked pissed.

"What the hell is that?"asked Emma.

"I do her bidding. Until she calms down she will be held there." giggled Merlin.

Merlin winked at Emma again. Killian caught it this time and raised an eyebrow.

Emma stood in front of him as close as she could without touching him. It was a comfort to know he was there with her even if they couldn't touch.

"Let's get this over with. "said Snow.

"Oh Prince Charming! Front and center please!"called Mim.

Mim waved her hand and pulled him from the crowd of men behind her against his will until he was standing next to Snow.

"Say your goodbyes now love birds. I can't wait to taste those lips."said Mim.

David pulled Snow into a long kiss.

"It will be ok. I'm with you every step of the way." said David.

Snow nodded her head in acknowledgement.



Mim began applying a thick slick of pink lip gloss to her puckered lips smacking them in her parent's direction.

"Yuk", said Emma.

"Don't remind me Swan. We've had to live with that threat for 2 days now." said Killian.

"Oh! Little John! Eeew!"said Emma.

Killian nodded.

"Come on Mermer do your duty."cackled Mim.

Merlin grumbled again. The target platforms magically appeared in the town square. They were set to regulation length and it appeared to be a tall wooden plank on a grounded platform. Each man was to stand in front of the plank with the apple on his head. David was magically pushed forward without allowing him to stop until he reached the platform.

Emma inspected the apples and they were all the same size and shape. The arrow heads had been covered so that there was no accidental dream shade poisoning. Each shooter would get three arrows for the game to shoot. Each shooter would get 3 apples. Mim selected that Snow go first in the games.

"Mim, you must follow the rules" said Merlin.

"Remember no magic can be used during the contest. "said Emma.

"I remember I heard you the first time Blondie!" said Mim.

"This is a non-magical contest. If I catch you cheating the game is over and you forfeit to Snow." said Emma.

"Enough with the rules ok? It's time to get this party started! Mermer assume the position I'm ready to play. "said Mim

Emma walked back over to stand in front of Killian to watch the contest. If this went bad she didn't know what she would do. She had faith in her mother that she could do this.

\_\*\*POV Changes to Snow during the contest here.\*\*\_

David was positioned in front of the plank and he had the apple sitting on top of his head. He was standing as still as he possibly could. She was afraid to look up. She didn't want to be deterred from her concentration and her nerves were already kicking in. She had been psyching herself up all day that she could do this. She wouldn't hurt him and he would be coming back to her soon. She put on her gloves and steadied her shaking hands. She took one of the arrows dipped in dreamshade and removed the cover from the tip. She placed it into her bow and positioned it to line up with her target. She locked her gaze with David's. His eyes were smiling at her as she stood there at the ready stance. She mouthed the words "I Love You" to him.

She pulled back and released the arrow. Seconds later the apple was

on the ground. Everyone was cheering around her. She felt relief sweep over her.

She could quit now and have David back safely with her. She looked around and saw the hope in the eyes of the other women and knew she had to move on. She swallowed hard and shook her head.

Emma was watching her with a furrowed brow. She could see the concern on the faces of everyone around her. She gave her a slight smile as she stood waiting for the next round.

Mim was up and she was busy fluffing her hair. She had a frown on her face.

"Well I guess I don't get a kiss this round. Boo Hoo" pouted Mim.

Clouds started to appear overhead above the crowd.

"At the Ready Mermer, just like we practiced." said Mim.

She readied her bow and placed the arrow into position. She pulled back and shot the apple.

The crowd booed.

"Did you think I would play a game that I didn't know how to win? Shall we continue?" cackled Mim.

"Yes, move on to round two." said Snow.

The crowd cheered. The women were looking at her with such gratitude.

"Oh Goodie, MerMer since I hit the target you get to take a rest. Come get my next target please?" said Mim.

She forgot about that part of the contest. She didn't want to watch as Mim selected another one of their friends to shoot at. It was one thing for her to shoot at David whom she loved and would do her best not to hurt him. Snow shook her head. She didn't want Mim to hit the target but now she would have to route for her to hit it. She wanted this to be over. She wanted her friends to be safe.

She looked over to Emma. Emma shook her head and was standing in front of Killian almost guarding him from Mim's gaze over the crowd. The crowd was buzzing.

"I'll do it" said Dr. Whale.

Everyone looked back and Snow noticed the look of anguish on Ruby's face.

"Victor, why?" asked Ruby.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I've no family here. Why not me?" said Victor.

"Oh aren't you pretty. It would be a shame if I missed. I'd hate to

damage your face." said Mim.

She pranced over to get a better look.

She grabbed his face between her hands and appeared to be licking him with her eyes. They glowed brightly as she scanned his face.

"Oh he will do nicely. "cackled Mim.

"Keep your grubby hands off of him you witch!" screamed Ruby.

"Oh darling flattery will get you everywhere with me but he's volunteered and I'm accepting. You want to save him we'll talk later." said Mim.

Snow noticed that Mim's eyes were glowing, a bright shade of yellow, as she looked over Victor. It was really creepy. She looked to Emma to see if she noticed too. She nodded her head.

Mim puckered her lips and applied more of her pink goopy lipstick.

"Mermer set him up. I'm ready." said Mim.

Ruby looked at Snow with a plea in her eyes.

"I'm sorry." she mouthed.

Mim now had the town hopeful that she would hit the target and spare Dr. Whale's life. This made her even more pissed off. Snow clenched her hand tightly against her bow. She thought of David waiting patiently and composed herself.

She looked out to see David by the target and waved at him.

"You're doing great Honey! I'm ready when you are." he yelled.

She smiled at his reassurance.

"Ok, I'm ready." said Snow.

Once again she prepped the arrow and got it ready. She held the bow steady in place. She felt the wind blow against her skin. She locked eyes with David and spied the apple on top of his head. He was smiling at her and she couldn't help but feel her heart fluttering.

She held her breath and pulled back the arrow and released.

The apple was on the ground but it was a bit closer of a hit that time. She saw David feeling the top of his head. The crowd was cheering.

"Are you OK David?"yelled Snow.

"Yes, that was a bit closer than I would hope for but you did great!"yelled David.

"Ok ok, no kiss this round either. You're better than I thought you would be." grumbled Mim.

Even more clouds started rolling in over head. The sun was peeking out just a glimpse now.

Victor Whale was standing at the ready at the platform. He was looking straight ahead staring at Ruby who positioned herself behind Mim.

"Be careful you witch." hissed Ruby.

"Don't worry, I have no intention of missing and hurting his pretty face." said Mim.

Ruby looked at Snow with worry in her eyes. Snow knew that Ruby had feelings for Whale but she didn't know the extent.

Mim positioned her bow and readied the arrow for shooting.

Everyone was silent as she shot the arrow.

She hit the target. Everyone cheered.

Mim was strutting around like a peacock and the clouds seemed to clear up a bit.

Snow looked over at Emma once again to make sure she took note of that. She was nodding.

Victor looked relieved and he slumped over on the platform grabbing his knees and letting out the breath he was holding. They were tied now two to two.

"OK Ladies I get to choose the next contestant of the games. I choose you!" said Mim pointing to Ruby.

"Me? But I've no claim to any of those men." said Ruby.

"Well you do seem rather infatuated with my target." said Mim pointing to Dr. Whale who was still out by the target.

"Um" said Ruby

"Well if you don't want him, I'll gladly just keep him. I like him he's handsome. I bet he and I can have a lot of fun. You heard him, he has no family here." cackled Mim.

"No, how dare you. You witch! I'll play! I'll play!" yelled Ruby.

She was rushing to grab hold of Mim.

Emma pulled her back but she kept fighting to grab her.

"Mermer we got another live one here. Sedate her." cackled Mim whose eyes were glowing even brighter.

He waved his hand and Ruby, like Belle was frozen to the street and silently screaming.

"It's settled then, she will be my next contestant playing for the good Dr. Whale. I'm sure we can play Dr later if you like Dr. Whale.

I'm always ready for a checkup." giggled Mim.

She could see Ruby was struggling and yelling loudly even though we could not hear her.

Dr. Whale entered the pool of men just as he was before and was frozen to the ground. He gazed at Ruby with a smile. Ruby appeared to be calming down as she smiled back at him.

"Still ready Princess?"asked Mim.

Snow was even more pissed off after witnessing what she just did to her friend.

"Yes, let's do this." said Snow.

She readied herself with the third and final arrow. She gazed at David and mouthed the words I Love you. She took a breath and pulled back. She locked eyes with David and shot the last arrow. She hit the apple and it fell to the ground. David was released from the plank immediately and he came running to her.

He picked her up and spun her around kissing her breathless.

"I knew you could do it!"said David.

"Thanks for having faith in me." said Snow.

"Well you might be done your round but the game is not over yet. I have one more shot. If I win the rest of the men stay with me." grumbled Mim.

The clouds started to fill in the sky once more.

"I'm just happy I don't have to kiss that thing." said David.

Snow reached up and pulled David into a deep kiss.

"Mine" she said smiling.

"Always" David smiled.

"Mermer get on the target. You're up!"yelled Mim.

Mim was visibly getting angry. She didn't like to lose and they were afraid of what her temper could do. They all knew she liked to use Dark magic. Merlin was once again sleeping on the ground in front of Emma.

Emma reached down and helped him to his feet.

"Thank you dear girl."he said.

He began walking to the target stumbling to and fro as he went out. He stood in front of the plank and put the apple on his head.

"Ready Mim!"he called.

Mim's eyes were glowing yellow and her face was turning a purple color to match her hair. They watched as she pulled back the arrow

and shot towards Merlin. It appeared to be floating low and just missed hitting him in the side of his head. He stumbled to the side and the apple fell to the ground.

Mim was jumping up and down in anger, curses flying from her mouth. The ground began to shake and the people of the town were shaking from side to side.

"I don't like to lose! I don't like to lose! I don't like to lose! I don't like to lose!" Shouted Mim.

Rain clouds started forming over Storybrooke and it began to thunder and lightning.

Merlin appeared by Mim's side.

"Calm down Mim you are going to hurt yourself. Not to mention the rest of these good people here in the town." said Merlin.

He was rubbing her back lightly as if he truly cared about her. Her coloring started to return to normal and the clouds started to disappear.

The majority of the men's feet became free and they moved from the town square running to their loved ones. Snow won the contest and her prize was fulfilled. The men that Mim noted as exceptions were still frozen in their position on the street. Snow watched as Emma and Killian were standing as close as possible without actually touching. She couldn't help but notice how they were looking at each other. She smiled at the thought of her little girl being in love.

Merlin and Mim were approaching and she still looked visibly angry.

"Well Princess it appears you are the best archer. It pains me to say that you have won this contest. You have also won a request from me later in the games. I suggest you use it wisely." said Mim.

"Ok, I will" said Snow.

She reached out and shook her hand as a good sport would at the end of a contest.

The clouds seemed to clear up a little more and they were seeing the sun again.

The magical duo walked away with Mim grumbling and Merlin nodding his head. Neither of them looked happy. Merlin was rubbing Mim's back in what looked like an effort to calm her down.

Snow looked at Emma who was still standing in the square with Killian. She felt sad for her daughter who was trying to do everything to get them out of this.

They walked over to her because they knew she wanted to spend time with Killian while she could.

"Dad are you ok? She didn't hurt you did she?" asked Emma.

"No, thanks to you she didn't lay a finger on me. You have Hook to

thank too as he kept reminding her not to touch the merchandise."  
said David.

Snow watched as Emma balled her hands up into fists.

"You told me you would be careful." said Emma.

"Well I couldn't very well let that bloody witch put her hands all over your father could I?"asked Killian with a smirk.

"No, I suppose not but what if she retaliated against you?"asked Emma.

"Come on David, let's go get our son and go home. "said Snow.

Emma hugged them.

They linked their arms and walked back towards Granny's.

"Go on I'll meet you inside." said Emma.

~~~~~back to Emma POV~~~~~

Emma, Ruby, Belle, and Marian remained on the street. The rest of the men that Mim retained as part of her prize pool remained in place still frozen. Merlin was still trying to comfort Mim after her loss. Belle and Ruby were released from the ground. Ruby smiled at Dr. Whale and ran to catch up with Snow and David. Regina came back out and was talking to Belle rather closely in whispered tones. Marian was talking to Robin.

"Well Swan your mother is quite the shot. "said Killian grinning from ear to ear.

"I'm sorry, I'm not next. I wanted to get you out of that place."  
said Emma with a sad smile.

"It's ok Swan. They need someone to be the brains of that operation over there and I've got the mirror to keep me company if I need you."  
said Killian.

Emma smiled and she had her hands in her back pockets in her flirty stance.

"You know Swan I wouldn't mind a bit of sparks if you wouldn't. "said Killian.

"I'm not sure you could handle it." she said with a smile.

"Perhaps you're the one who couldn't handle it." he smiled.

Those familiar words were swirling around in her head. She inched closer to him, closed her eyes and leaned up to kiss him. As their lips touched the sparks shot out and she didn't care. That kiss was worth getting sparked 100 times. When she opened her eyes she was left with the other women alone in the square as the men disappeared with a poof.

## CH. 14

The discussion between Belle and Regina appeared to be heated. Belle was throwing her arms out to the sides and walking away from Regina towards Gold's shop. Regina just stood there with a disgusted look on her face.

"Regina what happened?"asked Emma.

"I simply suggested that she might want to use the dagger to try to call Rumple back to Storybrooke. She said that she already thought of that and tried and nothing happened. Then I suggested that perhaps she should let me try. She was adamant that I didn't touch it and that she didn't trust me with it. "said Regina.

"Well can you blame her for not trusting you? After all you did have her locked in a cell for 28 years plus she's under a lot of stress and I don't think she expected that they would be apart on their honeymoon." said Emma.

"We're all under stress but that doesn't excuse rudeness." said Regina with a smirk.

"I saw that little display earlier. How are you holding up? I'm pretty sure Mim knows about you and Robin. She had Merlin spying on the whole town." said Emma.

"I'll manage but I'd rather not discuss it with you. Let's get back to Henry. I'm sure he is waiting for us." said Regina.

"Fine, you don't have to talk to me about it but eventually you are going to have to talk to someone. It's not good to keep it bottled up." said Emma.

"I wouldn't be in this situation if it weren't for you so if you wouldn't mind I would rather just get back." scolded Regina.

"Fine." said Emma.

Regina started out ahead of her and she decided that rather than taking the uncomfortable walk back to the diner following behind Regina she would test her magic once more and popped out of the street back into Killian's room.

"Emma! You startled me." said Snow.

"Oh hi, sorry I didn't think anyone would be in here." said Emma.

"I just wanted to get a little privacy while I fed your brother. I'm waiting for a room to be ready here at Granny's." said Snow.

"Where's Dad?"asked Emma.

"Oh, he is downstairs with Henry telling him all about his latest adventure. Why aren't you down there?" said Snow.

"I was outside with Regina and I wanted to avoid an awkward silence walking back into the diner. We got into it a little bit outside. I



figured I would come up here and compose myself before I showed my face to the masses again." said Emma.

"You were amazing Mom." said Emma.

"Thank you, it means a lot to me that you were there for me and that we got to spend time together." said Snow.

"I know, even with all this madness it's been nice being close to you again and working together as a team." said Emma.

"Your father is going to tag in for me for awhile so I can settle in and take care of your brother. Neal seems to be doing much better with all of this chaos going on. I think he just wanted to be part of the action. I thought it would be a good idea get a room here at Granny's since you have the wards up. I'd like all of my family members to be safe under one roof." said Snow.

It was a good feeling to know she could offer her parents and her baby brother a sense of security by creating those wards herself.

"That sounds like a good idea. You need to take care of yourself too Mom. You just had a baby, won a contest by shooting poison arrows at your husband, not to mention we just got rid of the last witch. I think you have earned some down time." said Emma.

She leaned in and gave her mom a hug.

"Thank you." said Snow.

"I'll leave you alone with Neal and let you get some rest. I'm so proud of you. I know you did the hard thing when you could have taken the easy route. Those women were so grateful for what you did. I can see why everyone was so willing to protect you all that time." said Emma.

Snow smiled back.

"Like Mother, Like Daughter" said Snow smiling.

Emma looked back and smiled before she softly closed the door to the room. She took a breath and left to go meet the rest of the group in the diner.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

The men popped back into their holding room at the castle. Killian still felt the spark of her lips ghost his own. He blew a breath out.

"Whew! It was totally worth it." said Killian with a smile.

"Why do those landings back have to be so tough? I think she does it on purpose." said Archie rubbing his arse.

"Tell me about it." said Robin rubbing his back.

"Dr. Whale that was brave of you to volunteer to let Mim shoot at you." said Archie.

"Well, I didn't think anyone would miss me back in Storybrooke. The Enchanted Forrest wasn't even my home. I figure I had nothing to lose." Said Whale.

"Mate, from the looks of it I would say that you do have someone who cares quite a bit if something happens to you; so much so that she will be playing in some sort of contest to try to free you." said Killian.

"Ruby, yes she is quite special. I never expected her to step in and take the offer. I figured I would be the pawn of yet another sorceress." said Whale.

"She was a big help to Emma and me in the past. You can certainly say she is "special" Mate." smiled Killian.

"Oh you mean the wolf? Yes I'm fully aware of the wolf. We all have our secrets Hook." said Whale with a big smile on his face as he walked to join the other men at the table.

The room was a lot quieter now that the majority of the men had returned to Storybrooke. The Merry Men were already seated with Dr. Hopper at the table having a drink. Robin remained and was pacing back and forth trying to shake out his muscles from their fall back into the room.

"What about you Mate? Does Marian know yet? About you and Regina?"asked Killian.

"No, it didn't come up. We had barely gotten reacquainted when the commotion began. With all of this going on I couldn't bear to tell her. She just looks so lost. She mentioned the other women in Storybrooke were helping her. Ruby in particular has been helping her understand the types of food and assisting with Roland. She also mentioned that Emma and Belle had been very kind to her." said Robin.

"She told me about you and Emma, or should I say Charles and Leia? She said you rescued her from the dungeon in the queen's castle. Saved her from execution? Then kidnapped her to the future." said Robin with a smile.

"Aye, we did Mate. We couldn't just leave her there to die. We didn't know she was your wife. She wouldn't tell Emma her name for fear of having you executed by the Evil Queen. Ironic isn't it?" said Killian.

"That's an understatement. I'll never be able to repay you for this." said Robin.

"Swan was doing the right thing, she would not be looking for repayment Mate and I would do the same again if she asked. You know those hero types can't seem to keep themselves from doing good if they tried." said Killian.

"Well she is an amazing woman. You are lucky you have her." said Robin.

"Aye Mate, that she is and I know. I am at fates mercy and have been dealt the hand of a lifetime. I will do everything I can to make her happy." said Killian smiling.

"I'm not sure what I'm going to do about Regina. I don't believe Regina knew she had Marian executed and was responsible for my loss. That is one of the things that make this so sad. I was falling in love with her and she was the cause of my many years of heart ache." Frowned Robin.

"Worry about getting out of here first Mate, they'll be plenty of time to sort out your love life when you return." said Killian patting him on the back.

"Come on let's get a pint. Shall we?"asked Robin.

He patted Killian back and they walked over to join the rest of the men who were already downing their liquor. It seemed the men were trying to take a page out of Merlin's book. They figured if they were too drunk Mim would leave them alone.

He popped his rum bottle out of the back of his coat and took a long swig. He might as well join them. He wasn't going anywhere anytime soon.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

Emma walked in the diner through the back of the room. It was surprisingly quiet and it appeared as though most of the people went home. Ruby was behind the counter. Granny was sitting with Henry and her father in a booth. Regina was seated at a table reading through another of her mother's journals alone. There was no sign of Belle or Marian.

Emma approached Ruby who appeared to be extremely frazzled and cleaning the counter frantically.

"Hey Ruby, Are you ok?"asked Emma.

"No, I'm freaking out. How am I supposed to win against her? I can't do anything." whined Ruby.

"That's not true. Do you remember when you helped me on that case when I first got to be sheriff after Graham died? You found the clues with your amazing nose." said Emma with a smile.

"Yeah well unless there is a sniffing contest I'm not sure how I can win." said Ruby.

"Well, who says there can't be?"said Emma.

"What do you mean?"said Ruby.

"Why don't you challenge her to a contest in wolf form?"said Emma.

"Oh, I don't know Emma. That could be dangerous." said Ruby.

"What's the worst that could happen? You rip her throat out? You would be doing all of us a favor." said Emma with a smile.

"Like a real sniffing contest?"said Ruby.

"Well maybe a contest where you both have to find something and you could use your nose or your instincts?"said Emma.

"Maybe the first one to find the prize wins?"said Ruby.

"It's certainly something we could try. You've learned to control your wolf and I'm sure you could beat her hands down. She seems to have a bit of a short fuse and also seems to be a sore loser. We'll have to be careful." said Emma.

"Ok, that's what I'll do. When do I setup the contest?" said Ruby

"Well last time she just showed up in the square and we set the rules." said Emma.

"OK, I feel a little better about this. I just hope I can win because I would feel awful if that witch got her lips on Victor or worse. Yuk!" said Ruby.

"Whale will be fine Ruby. I know you can do this. I won't let her hurt him. If anything happens we will figure something out." said Emma.

Ruby smiled and twirled her hair on her finger.

"He's a sweet guy once you get to know him. He's not bad looking either." said Ruby.

"I catch you two looking at each other from time to time. Don't think I haven't seen it. I know you like him." smiled Emma.

"Is it that obvious?"asked Ruby.

"I don't know, I just know that I've seen it and I think it's pretty cool. You two could be good for each other." said Emma.

"You think so?"asked Ruby

Emma nodded.

"Yeah, don't put up a wall so high that you can't let love in. Believe me I know a lot about that. A smart woman told me that once." said Emma with a smile.

"I know this has to be hard for you too. I saw the way you and Hook were looking at each other and no one could miss the sparks flying. I guess things have gotten serious with you two? I want details when this mess is over." said Ruby smiling.

Emma smiled wide and walked over to join her father at the table.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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"Mom, Grandpa has been filling me in on all that happened while they were held in the castle with that nasty old witch." said Henry.

"Yeah, she is pretty nasty. That was why I didn't want you anywhere near her. I don't want her getting any other ideas. Who knows what she is capable of? My guess is she has been pretty tame while she has been here. Did you see the clouds rolling in and out?" asked Emma.

Henry and David both nodded in agreement.

"Grandma was amazing. I hope she can teach me to shoot like that." said Henry.

"I'm sure she would like that." said Charming.

"She is a pretty amazing teacher. I can attest to that after today." said Emma proudly.

"I know she loved practicing with you. She always said she would teach our children how to shoot. Next its my turn to teach you how to fight with a sword." said David.

Emma laughed.

"Where is grandma?"asked Henry.

"I just popped in on her upstairs. She is resting and taking care of Neal."Emma smiled.

"Is she ok, does she need me up there?"asked David.

"No, she is doing fine. Neal is doing fine. She said you would be staying here at Granny's and getting a room." said Emma.

"Yeah, she told me how great you have been doing with your magic." said David.

"Yeah, it's coming along." smiled Emma.

She felt a blush creeping up in her cheeks feeling a little embarrassed for the compliment. She didn't want to reveal too much while Regina was still around. She also wasn't ready to let Henry in on her little secret. She still needed to understand her power better and until then it was better left unsaid.

"Henry, are you ready to go? I'd like to run home and get back to work if I can." said Regina who was packing up her bag.

"I'm glad to have you back Grandpa. Mom, I'll see you tomorrow ok?"said Henry.

"Yeah, Kid, stay out of trouble and help Regina if she'll let you. Be safe! Don't go anywhere without her ok?" said Emma.

"Glad you are back Charming. Ms. Swan." said Regina curtly.

"Bye Mom" said Henry giving Emma a big hug.

"See ya Kid." said Emma.

That left just her and David sitting alone in the diner with Ruby and Granny working in the back.

"I can feel the air is still a bit icy between you both." said David.

"Yeah, but what can I say. I wasn't going to let an innocent woman die for protecting my mother. I didn't know who she was. I never meant to intentionally hurt Regina." said Emma.

"Past actions can come back and haunt all of us. You did the right thing." said David grabbing her hand to comfort her.

"Thanks." said Emma frowning.

Emma, I'm glad we're alone. There are some things I want to talk to you about." said David.

"Hang on a sec, let me get you some cocoa." said Emma.

She waved her hand in the air and 2 mugs of cocoa with whipped cream topped with a sprinkle of cinnamon appeared on the table in front of them.

"Boom!" she said.

David smiled.

"Emma, that's amazing." said David.

Emma smiled and took a sip of her cocoa.

"What's up?" she asked.

"I didn't want to say anything while Regina was here. I learned something from Merlin while we were at the castle. He mentioned something to me about a special magic book. Do you know anything about this?" asked David.

"Do you mean this book?" said Emma.

She reached into her bag and pulled out Merlin's book.

"Was the book empty when you opened it? Did you have to unlock it or something?" asked David.

"Yes, I did. It nicked my finger and my blood unlocked the magic of the book." said Emma.

"I see." smiled David.

"Why, what do you know about this?" asked Emma.

"Well, Hook and I were with Merlin while Mim was off doing whatever it is she does at the castle. Merlin was getting drunk. He was rambling on about how powerful your magic was and that he had tried to give the book to others in the past but none were worthy until

you. He said that you were the first apprentice that he would have in years." said David.

"Apprentice? You mean he would teach me magic? Me?"asked Emma widening her eyes.

"Apparently." said David.

"Are you freaking kidding me?"said Emma.

"No, he said you were special. Which I already knew." said David.

Emma smiled.

"That would be amazing. I've already learned so much just from reading and practicing from the book. The book said that the person who opened the book had to be pure of heart." said Emma grinning from ear to ear.

"He seems to be a very powerful wizard. I'm not sure how he got into that situation with Mim but I would still be careful." said David.

"I think so too. I wish we could help him. I'll talk to Killian about him. See if we can't find a way to help Merlin."said Emma.

"Things seem to be getting pretty serious between you and Hook?"asked David.

Emma smiled and took a sip of her cocoa.

"You want to get into this now?"asked Emma.

"Well, I can tell how much he cares about you. I can see it in the way he looks at you. You should hear him talk about you." said David smiling.

"I care about him too. I'm worried about him and I miss him. Every time he leaves I feel a little empty I'm trying to keep my mind off of him right now so I can focus." said Emma.

"That's the same way I feel about your mother when she isn't with me." smiled David.

Emma looked wistfully at him.

"Mom is amazing. She is such a strong person. She could have taken the easy way out but she didn't." said Emma.

"Well, that's your mother. She will always try to do right by her people. I didn't have any doubt she would get me back. We have been through too much to let a horny witch get in our way." said David.

"Well you should get up there and relieve her. She's missed you and she could use a break. I'm sure your room is ready by now." said Emma.

"Are you going to be ok?"asked David.

"Yeah, I'm going to study down here for awhile and then head up to my room to get some sleep. I'm glad you're safe Dad." said Emma.

"Me too. We can talk more in the morning." said David.

She gave him a big hug and then he went up to meet Snow.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

"Mermer, this just won't do!" boomed Mim who was furiously pacing the room.

"Well it was a fair match. She gave you a run for your money now didn't she?" giggled Merlin.

"I can't let a town full of princesses beat me at my games. Who do they think they are?" asked Mim.

"Well maybe the rumors are true? They do seem like quite the capable bunch of ladies if you ask me." said Merlin.

Thunder boomed outside of the castle.

"Calm down Mim, you don't want to do anything rash." soothed Merlin.

"I guess I'm just going to have to step up my game a bit. I wasn't prepared to lose the prince today. It was just no fun. It's a pity, he was quite a tasty morsel. I was rather looking forward to taking a bite out of him. No matter, I can't see how that little girl can beat me. I'll have the good doctor to play with soon." She cackled.

Merlin rolled his eyes and slumped in the corner chair in Mim's lavish room.

"Mermer, Be a lamb and help me with my zipper?" she purred.

"Mim, you know you don't need me to do this. You can undress yourself just fine." said Merlin rolling his eyes.

He was already feeling a bit of a headache from all the alcohol he drank earlier before the games.

"Is it so wrong that a girl craves the touch of a man? It's the least you can do since you failed me today." she whined.

Ugh " he waved his hand and her dress unzipped magically.

"Oh Poo Mermer! You're no fun!" said Mim pouting.

She grabbed her robe and threw it over her shoulder. She put her eye mask on and pulled it up high on her head.

"I'll be in my room." said Merlin.

"Fine, I'll call you when I need you. I'm going to relax in my



bubbles if you care to join me just pop in."squealed Mim.

She waved her hand in the air and the tub pooled up with water and then topped off with an enormous mound of bubbles. She waved her hand again and all of the candles aligning the room lit. She stepped into the water and covered her eyes with the mask. The room was then filled with soft romantic music.

Merlin grumbled as he popped out of the room after making sure she was safely distracted.

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The men were all happily getting drunk sitting around the table playing a round of dice. Killian was smiling and cheering loudly as he tossed them again. He wouldn't say if they were loaded or not but the men were distracted and having fun.

"Ooooh, Fryer Tuck I believe you are out!"shouted Killian.

Fryer Tuck grimaced at the thought of having to play games with Mim in her private quarters.

"Tough break man! That means you are the volunteer if the witch shows up looking for a partner." said Robin.

"At least it's not you Little John!"said Whale.

All the men were laughing heartily while Little John grumbled. He still seemed unwilling to talk about his game with Mim. He seemed to be a bit disgruntled that he wasn't let go with the other men or the fact that Happy was able to beat her and he wasn't. Killian wasn't sure what the man was thinking but he grumbled a lot and he would tend to hide in the back of the crowd which was much thinner now and he would certainly stand out. He was quite tall and his curly hair was unmistakable.

"Ok gentlemen who's next?"said Killian.

He took another swig of rum from his flask.

"Hello Boys!"giggled Merlin.

The men all stopped in their tracks at the intrusion. Their mouths were gaping open and all of them turned quickly to make sure that Mim wasn't crashing their party.

"Oi."said Killian.

"I'm alone, don't worry the old battleaxe will be soaking in her tub for awhile licking her wombs from the day. Mind if an old fool joins you? I would love a good round of dice." said Merlin.

"Come on then." said Killian waving his hand offering for him to join them.

"Oh No this won't do, more drinks are needed." said Merlin.

He waved his hand and all of the pitchers were refilled on the table. There were also trays of food that magically appeared. Killian also found his rum had been replenished.

The men all cheered!

"Let's keep this party going." said Robin.

Killian handed the dice to Robin.

"Go on then it's your turn. I'll sit this round out." said Killian.

Merlin was sitting at the table downing pints again as he did earlier. Killian was amazed at how much that man could put away and still be standing.

"Hello my boy, I hope I didn't interrupt your game too much." said Merlin.

"How is it that you can put away so many pints and still live to tell a tale or stand up for that matter." said Killian.

"Oh, it's simple my boy my lips have been cursed for as long as I can remember. It takes three pints to offer me the buzz from one. Devil of a curse let me tell you. Especially when you really want to get drunk. I spend more time in the bathroom than anything. Damn Gypsy. One day I'll find her and get this curse removed." said Merlin.

"Now that is not a curse I wouldn't wish to have anytime soon. Is there no other way to remove it than have the person who originated it remove it?" said Killian.

"I don't really know. Can't remember the reason why I was cursed in the first place. Don't tell Mim, its how I get out of doing things for her. She just assumes I'm a drunk and leaves me alone." he whispered.

"Ah!, That explains it. You've got to tell me how this little arrangement with Mim came to pass. I assumed maybe you were in a drunken stupor when this happened. If what you are telling me is true then I must know. How did you lose?" asked Killian.

"That's the interesting thing; you see I wasn't drunk because only I and now you know of my plight. Oh and of course the damn Gypsy too. I'm not sure how this happened. I don't even remember signing my name." said Merlin.

"Sounds like trickery to me." said Killian.

"You are likely correct my boy but Mim holds the contract so I must adhere to it. It has my magical signature on it. I can't break the bond and I'm stuck until I've worked off my debt." said Merlin.

"How long would that be?" asked Killian.

"Well I haven't been able to get a look at it because she keeps it in her room tucked in a drawer. She poofs it in from time to time to make sure I'm aware and I can feel the burn of my name on the document but she won't let me look at it. The only other option is

for someone to win my contract. Evil woman!" said Merlin.

"I bet my Swan could help you." Said Killian.

"Ah yes, Emma Swan. She will make a fine apprentice. Do you think she would help me?"asked Merlin.

"You have yet to embrace all that is my Swan. She is amazing. If she has her mind set on something she will do it. Sometimes she frustrates me to a fault but I would stand with her in any circumstance. I will talk to her for you." said Killian grinning.

"Ah, I can see you love her in the way you talk about her." said Merlin.

"Aye, I do. I don't know how I couldn't love her. She is a marvel." said Killian smiling.

"Good! I hope you are right. If she is as amazing as I suspect she is, I will be out of here in no time. Well I suppose we need to get you all out of here first." said Merlin.

"Yes, there is a matter of our freedom." said Killian.

Merlin was steady drinking again.

"You must get clever my boy. Make sure the women are choosing the games wisely. The more obscure the better. If she has attempted the games before she will certainly have the advantage. She is a very smart woman. Don't let her looks fool you. She loves all matter of sports and games. She is also very powerful. Why else would she have Rumple tied up and asleep out there." said Merlin.

Killian remembered the earlier discussion with Merlin about the Snow Lily and trying to wake Rumple. He would have to remember to tell Emma about that or at least hope David remembered.

"It will be difficult for me to tell them considering that I am here and they are there." said Killian.

"Ah, you assume I don't know about your magical mirror." winked Merlin.

Killian's mouth was gaping open in surprise.

"Don't worry my boy Mim doesn't know. I could sense it when you picked me up earlier. Magical objects do carry a bit of a frequency you know. Yours is humming quite a tune. That is one of the other reasons that I know your Swan is quite powerful. Not many can create such a strong bond to an object as she has done for you. Talking across realms, well its unheard of you know for anyone except maybe me. I shall like teaching her for sure." giggled Merlin.

Killian smiled brightly. He was so proud of her and she probably didn't even know she had done something extraordinary. He couldn't wait to talk to her. He had an ache in his heart. He really missed her. They had seen each other every day since he found her in New York and spent the greater part of the last few weeks together hunting the witch and not to mention their adventure into the past.

He was getting used to having her around him. After so many years of darkness she was an amazing and beautiful light.

"Well, I'm off to my room. We shall speak again my boy. Be careful."said Merlin.

Killian nodded his head.

"Good Night Boys!" yelled Merlin.

He waved his hand once more refilling their drinks and food trays once again and then he disappeared.

Killian took the opportunity to sneak off into a corner to try to contact Emma while the rest of the men were either passed out or occupied by game play. He pulled the mirror from his pocket and began tapping it as she instructed.

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Emma spent the night in Granny's reading through chapter after chapter of the book. There were some things that were very confusing. She made some notes and she hoped she would get the chance to ask Merlin some questions at some point. She was still letting the idea of him calling her his apprentice sink in. She read and re-read the chapter on Realm Jumping until she felt like she understood what she needed to do. It was about keeping her emotions in check and focusing on a feeling or the place that she needed to go. It was a lot like what she did in Storybrooke but a bit more intensity would be needed. She couldn't help feel a bit dazed after the events of the day. She finally sank onto the bed in the room. She snuggled up against her pillow taking in Killian's scent and feeling a sense of calm wash over her. She felt a buzzing in her pocket and remembered the mirror.

"Swan" whispered Killian.

"Hey, is it safe?"asked Emma.

"Yes, most of the men are inebriated and passed out and the others are caught up in a game of cards." said Killian.

"I'm in your room. I've decided to camp out here until you get back." she smiled.

"Miss me?"asked Killian with a smile.

"Yes, so much." she without hesitation and smiled.

"We've had a rough go of it the past few days haven't we Love?"asked Killian.

"Yes, but like you said before we've been in tougher scrapes than this and I suspect this won't be the last time. Next time I plan to be better prepared though." said Emma.

"Ah, how's the magic training going?"asked Killian.

"It's going well. Dad mentioned that you know about the book." whispered Emma.

"Aye, the wizard mentioned it to us. He believes you to be quite powerful Swan. He is aware that we have the mirrors." said Killian.

"What?" said Emma.

"It's alright Swan, I believe he is trying to help us. I also think we should try to find a way to help him. I think he has been falsely imprisoned by this witch and we might be able to free him." said Killian.

"Look at you being a hero again." she smiled.

He looked away shyly.

"Aye, that I am but I believe he will be important to you Swan. I want you to be happy and I would do anything for you Love." said Killian.

She was new to this type of affection or at least being receptive to it.

"Thank you Killian. " she whispered.

"Well I'm sure I can find ways for you to thank me properly once we are out of this mess." he smiled.

"Ah, there you are. I was wondering when the Killian I know would make an appearance. That's ok because I might be handcuffing you to me when you get back. I'm not going to lose you again." said Emma playfully.

"You do love your cuffs Swan." joked Killian.

"Yeah but I may be persuaded to use them in a good way." said Emma smiling.

"You don't play fair princess." laughed Killian.

"I'll just have to pretend this pillow is you for the time being." said Emma snuggling up.

"It appears the rest of the men are down for the count. All passed out around here. Their tactic was to get themselves drunk in hopes of evading the witch's advances if she were to make an appearance." said Killian.

"Sounds like a good plan, what about you?" asked Emma.

"Well someone has to maintain their wits and it looks like I'm the Captain of this ship and likely in it for the long haul as I believe you are the final contestant." said Killian.

"No, Really?" groaned Emma.

"Well think about it Swan, I am devilishly handsome and well you are the most worthy contestant. It only makes sense that she would want

to keep me and fight you last." said Killian.

"You are making too much sense and it's too late for that." said Emma.

"Love you should likely get some rest." said Killian.

"Wait, Killian are you sure the rest of the men are asleep?"asked Emma.

"Aye, from what I see a cannon could go off in here and no one would be the wiser." said Killian.

"I want to try something ok. Would you help me?"asked Emma.

"Aye Swan, what do you need me to do?"asked Killian.

"I want to test some magic. Can you lie back and close your eyes? I want you to think about your heart beating. I want you to remember what it feels like to kiss me. I want you to remember what it feels like to touch me. I want you to think about how you feel about me in your heart. Put the mirror over your heart and keep your eyes closed Ok?"whispered Emma.

"Aye."said Killian lying back on the chaise. He closed his eyes and did what she asked.

Emma did the same and she felt her magic swirling up inside of her. She had to concentrate on him. She listened to him breathing through the mirror. She closed her eyes and thought in her mind, go to Killian. Her body flashed forward through the spaces and through what appeared to be a shield of energy popping into the grand room that was holding them.

She opened her eyes and she was standing right in front of him.

"What next Swan?"he asked.

She leaned forward and pressed her lips to his startling him. She grabbed the mirror before it fell and handed it to him.

"Swan? How are you here?"asked Killian.

He was looking at her with confusion in his eyes.

"It's me, I'm really here. I just had to try. I had to see if I could jump to this realm." smiled Emma.

"How can I be sure it's you and this is not some trickery on the part of the witch?"asked Killian.

"Ask me a question that I would know that no one else would know. You can also look into my eyes and see its me. Trust your gut."said Emma.

"What is the name you gave me when we entered the ball?"asked Killian raising an eyebrow.

"Prince Charles and I was Princess Leia." she said with a smile.

He looked into her eyes and his heart skipped a beat. He scooped her up in his arms and pressed his lips to hers kissing her fiercely like she was the air to his dying breath.

"I've missed you Swan. But How?"asked Killian.

"The book! I needed to see if I could do it. I needed to see if I could get here and get to you just in case something happened. I couldn't chance losing you if I failed." said Emma.

"I have yet to see you fail. That is one of the reasons I'm ok leading this band of men through this mess. I know you will save me." said Killian.

She put her hands around his neck and pulled him into another scorching kiss.

"Love, if you keep kissing me like that I'm not letting you go and you know you can't get caught in here." said Killian with a smile.

Emma took notice of the room for the first time.

"Wow this is a lot better than what I expected." said Emma.

"Don't let it fool you Swan, it's a prison cell just the same." said Killian.

"Yes, but its better than the dungeon I saw before." said Emma.

"Over there on that side of the wall is where the door is. Its humming like it's there but I believe its cloaked." said Killian.

Emma took note of the location of the door, the fireplace, and the windows around the top of the room.

"That's where they are holding Rumple?"asked Emma.

"Aye, he is sleeping outside the door on the floor with a chain around his neck." said Killian.

One of the men fell off his chair and pulled the table cloth with him causing a loud bang and crash of some of the cups. A few of them started to stir. Emma crouched down and hid behind the settee that Killian was lying on.

"I've got to get out of here in case someone comes back. They can't know I can get to you." said Emma.

"Merlin did say you were quite powerful. He said that this mirror is extraordinary. Not many besides him could likely create such a device." whispered Killian.

"Really? He said that?"asked Emma.

"Aye, he is learning what I already know about you Love. That you are very special." whispered Killian.

She reached over and grabbed his hand and squeezed.

"Ok Swan, the coast is clear. All passed out once again." said Killian.

She stood up from behind the settee and hugged him as tightly as she could. He held her closely reciprocating the embrace.

"I'm going to go. I need you to do it exactly as before ok. I'll be leaving you but I want to remain connected to you. It makes me feel steady while I'm going through the chaos of shields and in between the spaces. I know where I'm going so I can get there but I feel better knowing you are with me." said Emma with a smile.

"As you wish."said Killian.

He lay down on the settee and put the mirror over his heart.

She leaned over grabbing his face in her hands and kissing his lips softly.

He closed his eyes and did what she asked. He still felt the imprint of her lips on his own. He felt a little empty and then all he could hear was her voice.

"Killian, are you there?"asked Emma.

He picked up the mirror.

"Swan you did it. "he said.

"I'm back. I'm safe. Thank you." Said Emma smiling.

"Love, It's nice to know we can create sparks on our own." said Killian grinning from ear to ear.

She touched her lips lightly.

"Yes, I know what you mean. Good night Killian." said Emma.

"Good night Swan. I'll see you in my dreams." said Killian.

She lay back cuddling close to his pillow and closed her eyes content and excited for what she just accomplished.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

## 15. Serpent in disguise

\*\*A/N: I'm away for work so I didn't have the time to put as much into this chapter as I wanted so the next one will probably be rather large. I wanted to get you something to help fire you up as much as it did me. More to come this weekend!\*\*



She quietly entered the room. The men were sleeping in the center area of the room with the exception of Hook. He was curled up on one of the couches in the back corner facing the wall. She crept up closely and observed him sleeping. Merlin was passed out in her room in a chair. He knew her too well but luckily he didn't hear her leaving. He was always holding her back from having fun. She trailed her fingers up the pirate's back and into his soft silken hair. She could have just a little fun couldn't she? She waved her hands in the air and immediately transformed into Emma.

"Swan?" said Killian voice still groggy from drinking the night before.

He rolled over on the couch at the feeling of someone rubbing his hair. It appeared to be Emma but with yellow glowing eyes. She rubbed her finger across his bottom lip.

"Good Morning Handsome" purred Mim.

"Devil woman get your hands off of me!" he shouted and jumped up to his feet.

"What's the matter Captain? Isn't this what you like? I'll let you do anything you want." cackled Mim.

She stood up and twirled around transforming her clothes to look like the clothes Emma was wearing at the contest yesterday.

"Perhaps you would prefer this outfit? I'm sure I could create some sparks with you too Captain." cackled Mim.

He stood back in amazement. If it weren't for her glowing yellow eyes he might have been fooled by this evil witch. Emma warned him to watch out for her but he didn't know she could transform shape like this.

She began walking towards him and Killian backed up towards the rest of the men in the center of the room. They were rousing from their sleep and he needed to get some distance from the witch. Robin came to stand next to him. They both stood still with a shocked look on their faces looking at a demonic version of Emma. They braced themselves for whatever surprises they could face. She was certainly dangerous.

"Ooh Goodie! The thief has come to the pirate's rescue. The more the merrier. If I can't tempt the pirate like this, then maybe I would have more luck with the thief. Like this?" cackled Mim.

She transformed into Regina. Robin's eyes went wide. The men realized they were frozen in place and couldn't retreat against her advances. This was going to be trouble.

"I demand you release us you daft witch! What sort of trickery is this?" yelled Killian.

Mim circled them and began running her hand over the backs of their shoulders and as she walked slowly around them.

"This is what you like isn't it Thief? A beautiful Queen perhaps? Or maybe you would prefer a humble peasant maid?" cackled Mim.

She transformed into Marian.

Robin closed his eyes as she ran her hands up into his hair and began whispering into his ear.

"Leave me alone you evil witch. I don't want you touching me. I'm not a piece of meat for you to devour." said Robin.

She still looked like Marian but the yellow glowing eyes were slowly getting brighter as she appeared to become more agitated at her failure to seduce any of us.

"But you haven't seen me in 28 years. Aren't there things that you want to say or do to me? I've missed you."she pouted.

Robin grimaced as she came closer and was almost touching her nose to his. She was like a serpent taunting us with a poison inducing bite, that none of us wanted. The Merry Men tried to come to Robin's aid but with a wave of her hand Mim threw them back to where they were in the far side of the room. Dr. Whale was suddenly pulled forward joining Robin and Killian. The rest of the men were frozen in place after their fall.

"Oh, the good Dr. Whale or should I say Frankenstein. Thank you for joining the party. I know something that will interest you." she giggled.

She transformed into Ruby and came over and grabbed him from behind holding her body up against him and grinding against him. She circled him in front and came up against him nose to nose putting her hands on his chest and blinking her eyes seductively.

"Does this interest you Dr?"She leaned up and licked his ear lobe.

"Leave me alone. I am not interested in doing anything with you." said Dr. Whale closing his eyes.

She was getting agitated as each man avoided her advances and pushed her away. They heard thunder boom outside.

"Well if I can't interest you like this then maybe this form would do better?"she yelled.

She transformed into a wolf and came up close to him snarling.

"Mim, leave those boys alone!"yelled Merlin.

Killian closed his eyes in relief. Thank god for the old wizard. This witch was daft.

Mim transformed back into the form they were familiar with.

"Oh Mermer , Why did you have to come in and spoil my fun? I was just trying to play with my pets."whined Mim.

"Mim, You don't own them and they are not your pets."He shouted.

Merlin waved his hand and the men were freed from their frozen stance and quickly banded together on the far side of the room out of her reach.

Mim walked over to Merlin and grabbed his face between her hands holding his gaze to hers.

"Mermer, I'll do what I like and you can't stop me. I've got you under my control and with one word I can put you away in a little box for the duration of your debt." She growled.

Thunder was booming outside again.

"If you win I won't stand in your way but until that happens they don't belong to you and you need to keep your hands to yourself. Those women will not be happy if you hurt their friends and family. You have got to play fair!" scolded Merlin.

"Mermer you're no fun! Hmmf!" shouted Mim as she poofed out of the room in a yellow puff of smoke.

Every man in the room breathed a sigh of relief when she left.

"What the hell was that?" asked Robin.

"I feel like I'm going to be sick." said Killian.

"At least she didn't kiss you." said Little John.

All of the men began to grimace at that comment.

"Boys, I'm sorry about Mim. I do try to keep an eye on her and she evaded me this morning. I should have warned you about her transformations." said Merlin hanging his head.

"We are like lambs waiting for the slaughter for a horny witch." said Dr. Whale.

"She transformed into a wolf." said Fryer Tuck.

"She could have eaten us all." said Robin.

"We have got to get out of here." said Archie.

"Swan is not going to be happy about this when I tell her." said Killian smiling.

"Why are you smiling?" asked Robin.

"I've seen her mad and Mim isn't going to like it." said Killian.

"She's a firey one isn't she?" asked Merlin.

He was rubbing his hands together with a giddy look on his face.

"Aye she is." said Killian.

"Don't forget about Regina. We all know what she can do when she is

angry." Smiled Robin.

Killian looked at him and raised an eyebrow.

"I'm off to help Mim cool down. There is no dealing with her when she is acting like a sore loser. I'm sorry boys I'll think of something to keep her away." said Merlin scratching his beard.

He shimmered from the room leaving the men alone.

"Am I correct in assuming that Merlin wants Mim to lose and appears to be trying to help us?" asked Robin.

"Aye, Mate. He is trying to help. He as much told me so last night." said Killian.

The other men looked a bit confused by that statement, but Killian knew that Merlin wanted to be rescued just as much as they did. A little fuel on the fire might just be what they need to get out of this mess. The women would certainly be angry when they heard about her latest little escapade.

As the other men assembled at the table he went off to the corner to contact Emma. He still had to be careful not to let them know about the special magic that he had been learning. If others found out she could be in danger, especially if someone told Mim. He would also have to remind Emma that what he told her would need to be a secret or Mim would know they had spoken. This wasn't going to be easy.

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Emma felt a buzzing against her chest. She rubbed her hands on her eyes and opened one eye to look at the time on the clock sitting on the bedside table next to her. She groaned. It was early. Then she realized it was the magic mirror.

"Hook?" asked Emma with a groggy voice.

"Swan, I'm sorry to wake you but something has happened and I need to speak with you." said Killian.

Kilian explained to Emma what happened that morning at length. He made sure not to leave out any of the details.

"Sonofabitch! I'm going to kill that witch. She doesn't know who she's messing with." she yelled.

Emma was fired up and she wasn't feeling sleepy at all anymore.

Killian smiled.

"Swan, Merlin came in and rescued us but we were powerless against her and her magic. We are banking our safety on the word of a daft horny witch and her willing lap dog. If it weren't for her glowing yellow eyes she would have been you. I could sense she was off but she looked just like you." said Killian.

"I'm going to get you out of there if I have to come in and steal you myself!"she yelled.

"Swan calm down. We need a plan or we won't get out of here without Rumplestiltskin. Besides she can't know I've told you. She would find out about the mirror." said Killian.

He could hardly believe those words were coming from his mouth. He was actually trying to find a way to save the man he tried to kill for so long.

Emma smiled at the realization of the words he just spoke. He really had changed.

"Ok, you're right. We need a plan. I'm going to talk to the other women and let them know what happened today. This has to end and we need to get you guys out of there. We can't trust her." said Emma.

"Aye, you are right. We are going to be on high alert from this moment on. I don't think any of us will sleep right her after the events of this morning." said Killian.

"Killian, I'm so sorry. I want to get you out of there." frowned Emma.

"Swan, don't worry about me. I'll be ok. I've dealt with powerful witches before. I was able to manage being friends with Cora for 28 years under her constant threats. I think I can handle the advances of a crazy witch." said Killian scratching his ear.

"One thing is for sure, I've missed you Killian. Seeing you and not being able to be with you is driving me crazy." said Emma.

"Aye,I feel the same. " said Killian.

"If something happens again you call me on that mirror ok? I don't care if she knows I can get there. She's going down. We've been playing fair but the gloves are off now." said Emma.

"Swan, there may be a way for us to wake Rumplestiltskin. Merlin mentioned a flower called a Snow Lily. It grows here near the castle. It has the power to wake the sleeping dragon. Someone's coming." said Killian.

He faded out of the mirror and she was looking at herself. She picked up the pillow on her bed and put her face into it and screamed as loud as she could. She needed to get them out of there and fast.

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## 16. Clearing the Air

Ch16

Emma heard a loud knocking on her door.

"Emma? Is everything all right in there?" called David.

Emma tossed the covers off and climbed out of the bed to answer the door.

She let David in and stomped over to take a sip out of a bottle of water on the nightstand.

David sat on the edge of the bed. Emma walked over and sat next to him and brushed her hands through her hair. David put his arm around her and squeezed her into a hug.

"Killian just contacted me through the mirror and things are not good." said Emma.

"Oh No! What happened?" said David.

Emma explained everything that happened during Mim's attack on the men that morning.

David shook his head.

"Emma, the constant threats from Mim are awful. I'm so happy to be home but we need to get them out of there. She wants you to believe it's all fun and games but she is a very powerful and dangerous person. When we are frozen in place it's scary. We are paralyzed so we can't move." said David.

"I know. I never wanted to play the games in the first place. I was scared of her. I didn't know if I could beat her and I certainly didn't know how I would get to you even if I could. What if she hurt you all because of me? I'm just getting so frustrated with this situation and I'm tired of being pushed around by Mim." huffed Emma.

"Emma you are a powerful person too. You are getting better at controlling your powers and I believe you can do anything if you can set your mind to it." said David.

"I wish we could rescue them without having to play the damn games but with Rumple as the dragon I can't see how we can do it. We need to be able to save him too." said Emma.

"Merlin told Hook and I about a special flower called a Snow Lily. He said that it can be used to wake up the sleeping dragon." said David.

"He mentioned this but he was cut off and I didn't get more details. He said that the Snow Lily grows near the castle. Can you tell me more about this?" said Emma.

"They put Rumple to sleep because he is more powerful than Mim. That much you know. Merlin said that he would only wake up if he were roused with the scent of a Snow Lily. You can only find them in the garden on the North side of the castle. There are only 6 blooms this year and he keeps one in his pocket with him just in case there is an emergency and he has to wake him quickly." said David.

"Even if we wake him up he is still a dragon. How can we get him back to being Rumple?" asked Emma.

"I don't know. Is there anything in that magic book of Merlin's that can help us?" asked David.

"Well, last night I tried realm jumping and it worked. I was able to get to the castle and home." said Emma.

"You did What? That was dangerous Emma. You should have told me before you tried that. What if it's dangerous?" said David.

"Dad I can't trust her. I needed to find a way to get to them if something went wrong in these contests. I would never allow her to keep any of our family or friends. I was in constant contact with \_Hook \_the whole time." said Emma.

"You have to be careful. What if she caught you? There is so much we don't know about her and her powers. I want to rescue them just as much as you but we have to be smart about this." said David.

"I know, I know." whined Emma

"I know you have this new power but you have to be careful." said David.

"Well at least I know I can get there. If we can get the flower then we can wake up Rumple. Now we just need to figure out how to turn him back into him. If we can figure that out then maybe we could just go and steal them back without having to keep playing." said Emma.

"But we would still have to deal with Mim and for now her minion Merlin. You know we need to find a way to save him too. Mim has got to have tricked him into this deal. How can someone as powerful as Merlin be held in servitude to a witch like that?"asked David.

"Dad I know. I believe he is trying to help us in whatever way he can. We'll have to figure this out. So far I haven't seen anything in the book about transformations or how to turn into something or turn someone back. Do you suppose it's a curse?"said Emma.

"It could be, I'm no expert at magic. It might be time you started talking to Regina. I know it's awkward and Snow mentioned she has been hiding out alone at her place with Henry since the night of Granny's but we need her." said David.

"I know you are right. She already told me she didn't want to talk to me about it. We are going to need to talk to Belle too. She has been frantic and we haven't had much to tell her. She and Regina got into it a bit yesterday too." said Emma.

"Well why don't I give you some time to get dressed and then I'll go with you if you want." said David.

"Thanks Dad, I'm glad you are here. Its been nice to have Mom and now you by my side through this. I think it would be best if you stayed here and talked to Ruby. If I'm not here when Mim approaches you need to help stall and also help Ruby. She and I already talked about what she is going to propose for her contest but she might need back up."said Emma.

David hugged her tight.

"No problem. I'll take care of Ruby. Remember, we're always here for you Emma. You never have to be alone again." said David.

"Say Hello to Mom for me and let her know I'm alright. Kiss Neal and tell her to stay put. I don't want her exerting herself any further with this. For once it's nice to know my family is safe and protected. Regina has been taking care of Henry and I suspect that he has been helping her too, whether he knows it or not." said Emma.

"Will do!" said David.

He left the room and closing the door behind him.

Emma felt the fight growing within her. She was more determined to try to find a way to bypass these games but she knew that Ruby was already challenged. They would have to go through with it. Maybe they could find a way of rescuing Rumple during Ruby's contest when everyone was distracted.

She was going to have to get help from Regina. As much as she didn't want to she needed magical help and there wasn't anyone else in this town that could help her with that. She would have to be careful with what she revealed about her current magic training.

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Merlin appeared back in the room with men.

"Hello boys. It seems that I've been able to calm the waters for now but we will be heading to Storybrooke soon." said Merlin shrugging his shoulders.

"Thank goodness it was you Mate. I thought that evil witch was coming back for seconds." said Killian.

"Yeah, when we heard the noise we thought the worst." said Robin with a grimace.

"She has quite the temper and if you haven't noticed her emotions are quite in tune with the weather. Damned Tornados nearly killed me several times. Best to keep her in check if we can." said Merlin scratching his beard.

Killian knew she was a powerful witch but he wasn't sure of the extent of her power. He knew he needed more information about Mim to help Emma. He didn't want her putting herself in danger for him, especially in a fight where she could be hurt.

"Let's have some food and drinks my boys. We should put that morning business behind us." said Merlin.

"Breakfast would be good right about now." said Little John.

All of the men looked to him. He had been so short on words since his contest with Mim they weren't sure if he would ever be himself again.



"Ah, it's nice to see your appetite has returned John." said Robin.

Merlin waved his hand in the air and the table was set with plenty of food and drinks.

Little John smiled, grabbed a plate and piled on the food.

"So, do you have any idea what she has in store for us today?"asked Robin.

"No my boy, I believe it will be Ruby's choice. She has already made the decision to play in the contest for Dr. Whale." said Merlin.

"It would have been nice to have had had a warning Mate. None of us expected to see what we saw this morning. That kind of trickery is the worst kind." said Killian.

"Mim likes to use very powerful Dark Magic. She can transform herself into any living form. She is not impenetrable from harm but she can do it. In some forms it does leave her vulnerable to attack." said Merlin.

"When she was Regina would she have had Regina's powers?"asked Robin.

"Can you tell us exactly which forms are most vulnerable?"asked Killian with a smirk.

"No my boy, you were only seeing an illusion in those cases. When she transformed into the wolf her body transformed and she was in fact an animal. She still maintained her own powers in that form but she was indeed a wolf. To answer you Hook, only if I want to be strung up from the rafters. You'll have to figure that out on your own." said Merlin.

"How did she know that Ruby could change to a wolf?"asked Robin.

"Unfortunately my boys I am in her service and was required to research into your women. I was forced to provide details on them but I didn't give her anything but surface information. She knows Ruby can turn to a wolf but doesn't know how or why. She knows Emma has magic but doesn't know her capabilities. She also knows Regina was the Evil Queen and does have magic but her reputation preceded her so I didn't have to tell her anything.

"Mate, let's say that one was to procure a Snow Lily and wake up the sleeping dragon. How would you go about transforming him back to himself?"asked Killian.

Merlin raised his eyebrows and chugged his drink to the bottom.

"My boy if I were to tell you that I would be condemned to a box for the remainder of my debt. It's happened before and its quite unpleasant." whispered Merlin.

"It might be the only way that I'm able to help you Mate. If there is any chance of rescue aside from these infernal contests we need to

think of all possibilities." said Killian.

"It's a powerful spell to transform someone and this particular spell was created using Dark Magic. The only way to bring someone back from a curse with Dark Magic is to combat it with Light Magic. It will take very powerful Light magic to do this. That is all I can say." whispered Merlin.

Killian thought back to the night that he and Emma thought that Snow was killed by the Evil Queen. Snow transformed herself into a bug using the dark fairy dust. The blue fairy came and used light magic to turn her back. He also remembered that Regina and Emma both were able to conjure light magic. The most powerful light magic that he witnessed was True Love's Kiss. He thought perhaps Belle could awaken Rumple and break the curse? A rather large belch brought him back to reality.

Merlin appeared to be in a marathon to get drunk again. This time it seemed some of the other men felt they should join him. Dr. Whale sat alone in the corner near the fireplace. He looked in deep thought. Dr. Hopper appeared to be inducted into the Merry Men and looked quite happy in spite of their current circumstance.

Robin also appeared to be in deep thought. Killian tapped him on the shoulder.

"Oi Mate." said Killian.

"Sorry, I was just thinking. I wish we had another way to get out of here. Marian has already been through so much. I don't want to put her through this. She shouldn't have to fight for me. I'm not so sure she will want to when she finds out what happened between Regina and I." said Robin.

"So you plan to tell her?"asked Killian.

"I feel I have to. I don't want her to find out from someone else. Its already been awkward these past few days and with Mim bringing it up during the trial. I just can't hurt her but I'm not the same person I once was. I love Marian but I've spent the last long years trying to live without her and believing that she is gone forever. I've fallen in love with Regina. In spite of what happened in our past we are both different people now." said Robin.

"That is quite the predicament you have with those two. I don't envy you." said Killian.

"How did you do it? How did you put your feelings aside and move on when you knew Emma was lost to you? It's clear you love her." said Robin.

"Well I didn't handle it well. I tried to go back to my old life but she had changed me. She made an impression on my heart that could never be removed. No matter how I tried to fill the void it was eternally empty without her. When I got the message from the bird that day it was like my heart became full. I felt alive again. I knew I had to find her. She meant everything to me and I was willing to give it all up for her." said Kilian.

"I'm happy for you. I can see that she cares for you too. It's not

just you. She seems to glow when you are present." said Robin.

Killian smiled.

"If I can get out of here I plan to make her happy as long as she will have me but for me she is it. I'm forever changed." said Killian.

Robin patted him on the back and went to join the rest of the men for some food and drinks.

Killian quickly went to the back of the room to make contact with Emma.

He tapped on the mirror to reach her.

"Killian! Are you alright? You had me so worried." said Emma.

"It was only Merlin, seems the beast fancied a soak in the tub. I don't have long the men are distracted and Merlin is here." said Killian.

"We need to get Rumple back, we have to come up with a plan." said Emma hurriedly.

"I like the way you think Swan. I was just asking Merlin how we could get Rumple back to his true form. He wasn't able to tell me because he said that he would be condemned if Mim found out he told us. All he could say was that he was transformed by Dark Magic" said Killian but he was cut off by Emma.

"And that requires Light magic to turn him back. Just like my mother when she was the bug." said Emma smiling.

"Yes, exactly. " said Killian grinning ear to ear.

"I know we have to go through the contest with Ruby but I'm going to talk to Regina and see what we can do. I'll get Belle too. She might have to help me with this little plan. Please stay safe. I miss you." said Emma.

"I miss you too Swan. I suspect you will be seeing Mim soon to setup the rules for the next game. Be prepared Love. I'll be thinking of you." said Killian.

Emma smiled.

The mirror faded and he went over to join the men for breakfast. He wasn't sure what the day would bring but it would be best if he was prepared.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

Emma rushed to Regina's house. She probably should have called first but she was fired up. She approached the door with caution to avoid the wards and rang the bell.

"Ms. Swan? Its rather early isn't it?"said Regina.

"I need your help. I need to tell you what's happened. Is Henry still asleep?"asked Emma.

"Yes, he stayed up rather late last night playing video games so I suspect he will be asleep for awhile longer." said Regina.

Emma smiled at the thought of Henry being a normal boy who played video games and didn't worry about an evil witch.

"Good. I would prefer he didn't hear what we need to discuss." said Emma.

"Come in and let's go back into my study." said Regina.

They entered the room where they held the sã@ance to bring back Cora and Regina shut the door. They sat at the table in immediate silence.

"I know you are still upset with me. I don't blame you and I hope you know I'm truly sorry. It was never my intention to hurt you." said Emma softly with a bit of hesitation in her voice.

Regina sat quietly and adjusted her sitting position. She was clearly uncomfortable with the conversation they were having.

"Look I know you care for Robin. I saw you together and I know you were happy. You must know that he cares for you too. It was not an act on his part. He is probably as conflicted about this as you are. I'm sorry for that too. He is truly a nice man and I never meant to hurt him either. The thing is that Marian is here and she is Roland's mother. I can't feel bad about brining a child back his mother." said Emma.

"Ms. Swan.."Regina interrupted.

"No Let me finish please. I'm sure you remember what it felt like to lose Henry when the curse was broken. That was what she spoke about when we were sitting in the cells alone at the bottom of the castle. All she could talk about was her family and how important they were to her, how much she missed them. I just couldn't leave her there. I didn't know who she was, I promise you. All I knew was she was a mother who missed her child, I couldn't leave her."Emma pleaded.

There was an uncomfortable silence between the women.

"Are you finished?"asked Regina.

"Yes." said Emma.

"What do you want from me? I'm not happy. I'm not ready to accept this whole mess has happened. It hurts. I finally let myself open up to someone after all these years of pain to have it thrown back in my face. I'm just not ready to be ok with this." said Regina.

"I'm sorry! I can't do anything about it. I can't fix it but I can tell you that if you were able to get your heart broken that means it still works. Someone reminded me of that recently. This isn't the end Regina. You have a great capacity to love if you let yourself open up

to it. I'm trying to figure this whole thing out myself. It's not easy for any of us. Just remember you aren't alone and you never know how things will play out. Pixie dust doesn't lie after all." said Emma.

Regina brushed her hand across her eye to wipe away a tear that was forming.

"I know what you are saying but you don't understand how hard this for me. I'll help you but it won't be easy for me to see him. I'm trying to avoid the whole situation and her. I just can't be near her right now either." said Regina.

"Ok, this might not help matters when I tell you this. Do you remember when we were in Neverland and you spelled the mirror so we could talk to Henry?"asked Emma.

"Yes, what about it?"asked Regina.

"Well I've been studying magic and I spelled a mirror. I gave half to \_Hook\_. He and I have been in contact while he is at Mim's castle." said Emma.

"Across Realms? Through the wards?"asked Regina with a perplexed look on her face.

"Yes." said Emma.

"I've never known anyone with powerful enough magic to be able to do that." said Regina shaking her head.

"Well I did it. I don't know how I just did." said Emma.

Regina glared at her with sheer amazement in her eyes.

"Ok, why are you telling me this." asked Regina.

Emma told Regina about what happened to the men that morning and how Mim had imposed herself on their friends and that the urgency was escalated to help free them. She told her about the Snow Lily and the possibility of waking up Rumple but they would need to be able to turn him from a dragon back to a man if he was going to be able to help them defeat her.

Regina stood and walked to the other side of the study facing the wall. She held out her hand and a huge ball of light grew in it. She turned and threw it at a poor unsuspecting vase and it shattered. Emma cringed and shielded herself from the blast.

"Who does she think she is? I've had enough of her. How dare she impersonate me! "boomed Regina.

Regina was fuming. Emma let out the breath she was holding.

"Calm down, you don't want to wake Henry." said Emma.

"We need to take her down. She thinks she can come into my town. Steal our people! Impersonate me! She may have a sleeping dragon waiting back at her castle but the sleeping dragon in Storybrooke just woke up! I can't believe she would tease Robin like that with

such a delicate situation. She just got herself a fight!"said Regina.

"Now, that's the Regina I remember. I have a plan and we are going to need Belle's help too." said Emma.

Regina rolled her eyes.

"You know the bookworm and I don't have a good relationship. You saw what happened in the street yesterday." said Regina.

"Well, I think if we go together we can convince her to work with us. Today Ruby is going to have her contest and while they are distracted we have to try. I don't know how many chances we will get. I can't have the men sitting in danger like that. They may not be screaming but I know they are scared. If it were us they would be doing everything possible to help us. We owe it to them. Think of poor Archie." said Emma.

Regina put her hands on her hips and started to pace.

"Ok, you go on ahead and get started with Belle. I think a proper warning is on order before I come to the shop. The last time I was there wasn't exactly pleasant. I'll make sure Henry is safe with your parents at Granny's." said Regina

"Don't forget that Mim will likely pop in to negotiate the next contest sometime today. Be careful. I also have to help Ruby." said Emma.

Regina nodded.

"I'll be there as soon as I can." said Regina.

"Please tell Henry I'll see him later. I don't want to wake him for this. I'm trying to keep his life as normal as possible. If he wants to stay up and play video games like a normal kid I am happy. I don't need him worrying about another witch." said Emma.

"She won't know what hit her." smiled Regina grinding her teeth.

"OK. I'm going to find Belle." said Emma grabbing her bag.

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She opened the car and sat down. She let out a breath and started her car. She had to pull herself together. Things with Regina could have gone a lot worse. At least she got to say her peace and Regina was on board to help. She hated to admit it but she missed having fiery Regina on her side. In Neverland Regina would push the envelope when they needed it. She wasn't afraid to do it herself but she wasn't sure about her magic yet. Mim was a threat that she wasn't sure how to face. Regina has been doing this a lot longer than she has so without her, things would get ugly fast. Regina also knew how to fight dirty.

She held back the fact that she could realm jump from Regina. She

wasn't ready to let her know about her arrangement with Merlin or his magic book. She hadn't really understood it herself and if she mentioned it to anyone it would be Henry. She wasn't sure if she would ever let Regina know that information. She still wasn't sure how trusting she could be with her. She was getting better but she just saw of Regina in the past when she thought her mother was responsible for Daniel's death, she had to admit that she was afraid that she could easily slip back into her old ways. That was a side of Regina she hoped she would never see again. She would worry about that later. She knew that Regina still cared for Robin. It wasn't right that Mim used both Regina and Marian against Robin to try to get her way. There was going to be trouble today. She had to find Belle and get this plan in motion.

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Emma walked into Gold's shop. She found Belle cleaning the shelves.

"Is there news! I'm so sick of waiting." said Belle.

"Mim challenged Ruby so she will be coming today for a contest." said Emma.

"Yes, I remember." said Belle sadly.

"Thank you for not letting Regina in on that secret book by the way." said Emma.

"Yes, well I could see you were as confused as I was so I just let that go." said Belle.

"I've been learning a lot over the past few days. I need to fill you in on what has been going on because I'm going to need your help and it could be dangerous." said Emma.

Emma explained to Belle about how she was able to contact Killian with the mirror. She also filled her in on the events of the day, the Snow Lily, Merlin's support, and that they wanted to try to find a way to wake up Rumple but they needed to figure out how to change him back to himself.

"I've heard of the Snow Lily, it's very rare. Merlin must be helping us because we wouldn't have been able to find it if he hadn't told us where they were growing." said Belle.

"Merlin also keeps one in his pocket. If we can get that one it would make things easier. If we wake him up we still don't know how to change him back to a man. We don't know how dangerous Rumple could be as a dragon. Ruby had to learn to control herself as a wolf. Can you imagine a rogue dragon on the loose? I felt that we needed to be careful about this. I've invited Regina to come to the shop today to help us." said Emma.

"ugh, You know she and I don't get along. I've tried to avoid her at all costs." said Belle.

"I know she's not your favorite person but she is going to help us.

She has been heartbroken these past few days and hanging at home alone. I'm surprised she even offered to help you yesterday. She isn't do well with this whole Marian situation." said Emma.

"OK but, even if we get the Snow Lily and we figure out how to change him, how will we get to him. None of us has a magic bean and we would need two one for each trip." sighed Belle.

"Well, that's the other thing I need to talk to you about. I was able to jump realms last night and get to the castle." said Emma.

"What? Let's go now!"said Belle.

"Wait, we still don't have the flower, we don't know how to change Rumple back, and Mim is there. I don't think I can challenge her myself. She is really powerful and let's face it, I'm still learning. Listen you can't tell Regina about the realm jumping or the book." said Emma.

Belle nodded.

"The way that it was described it sounds like Rumple was cursed to be the dragon. That means dark magic made him and it needs light magic to change him back. I thought maybe if you tried kissing the dragon he could change back?"said Emma.

"You mean True Love's Kiss?"said Belle.

"Yes, that is the purest form of light magic that I know of, but the problem is that it's not sure fire to work. Just like trying to trigger memories for someone under a curse. True Love's kiss doesn't always work. I know Blue helped my mother turn from a bug back into a human when she had been spelled with dark fairy dust. I wonder if we had some fairy dust if that would work?" said Emma.

"Well if we could get some maybe we could give it to one of the guys to try to reach Rumple? They could test it?"asked Belle.

"He is hidden behind a cloaked door. Even if we get it to them they would have to figure out how to get past the door, wake up Rumple, and then try the dust without getting caught by Mim or killed by Rumple." said Emma.

Belle frowned.

"I had a thought about maybe taking you with me across the realm. Maybe we could tune in to Rumple's heart and it would get us outside the door. Since I've never been outside of the room I can't be sure that I would get us to the right place. I was able to jump there because I was tuned in to Killian's heart." said Emma with a smile.

The door to the shop opened and Regina stepped inside.

"Ms Swan I think you need to get to Granny's and calm down the wolf. She is completely frazzled with just the idea that Mim could get there at any moment." said Regina.

"Are my parents there? Is Henry ok?"asked Emma.



"Yes, David is talking to Ruby and Henry is upstairs with your mother and the baby." said Regina.

"Do you have any idea where we can get some light fairy dust?" said Emma.

"Well that would be one idea. We could go to Blue. It might be easier to have your mother talk to her. I don't exactly have the best relationship with her. Neither did Rumple so I'm not sure Belle would have luck with them either." said Regina.

Belle stood quietly in the background. The tension in the room was awkward. Emma nodded to Regina.

"I hear congratulations are in order." said Regina.

"Yes, Thank you." said Belle.

"I'm sorry that your husband was taken from you. A newly married couple shouldn't have to spend their honeymoon apart." said Regina.

"I'm sorry I snapped at you yesterday Regina. I'm just frustrated and I was looking for new answers. It sounds like we might have something here with the Snow Lily. If we can find the dust we could have a chance. Is there any other way you can think of to change him back?" asked Belle.

"I'm not sure but maybe Rumple has some books here at the shop that we can research if you don't mind my help." said Regina.

"No, thank you I appreciate it." said Belle.

Emma let out a sigh of relief. At least Regina and Belle were being civil to one another. That was all she could hope for right now.

"I'll go and check in with Ruby, ask my Mom to talk to Blue and try to get this witch to agree to our terms. I'll let you know if I get a time for the contest and you let me know if you find another way. Thanks for your help!" said Emma.

The women nodded and walked to the back of the shop into the space that Rumple keeps his books.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

By the time Emma reached Granny's Ruby was calming down. Her father had helped her get over the latest bout of nerves and she was collecting herself.

"Ruby, just like we talked about yesterday. I'm here for you. We all are." said Emma.

"I know. I'm just scared. What if I lose then poor Victor is going to be dessert for that witch. Ugh I can't even think about it." Said Ruby frowning.

"I think it says a lot that you offered to do this. He looked so surprised and he looked happy. I think he appreciates that you offered. You didn't have to do that. I guess if he didn't know you cared for him before he knows now." said Emma.

Ruby bit her lip and smiled shyly.

"I suppose you're right and I would much rather have him as my dessert than her dessert." said Ruby.

Emma patted her on the arm.

"Now we just wait." said Emma.

Emma walked over to the table and sat down with David.

"Dad, I need you to find out if we can get some light fairy dust. We need something to help combat dark magic and try to get Rumple back to himself. Do you think you or Mom could talk to Blue?" said Emma.

"Of course, I'll go to the convent right now." said David.

"Thanks Dad. It's probably a good idea if you aren't here when Mim comes by anyway. I don't want her getting any ideas of getting you back in the pot. It's creepy how she was ogling over my father." said Emma.

"Your old man's got it. What can I say." smiled David.

Emma shook her head and laughed. With her father going after the dust, Regina and Belle looking for alternate options to change Rumple back, and Ruby feeling confident, she decided to take a moment to study her book and have some coffee while they waited for Mim.

**\*\*A/N:** Plans are forming for the next contest and they are trying to come up with a rescue plan. Ruby is ready to wolf out to win back Dr. Whale. Thanks for reading. I'm sorry the last few chapters were meant to be one long one but I was out of town this week and I wanted to get some updates out as I could. I really appreciate your comments. They really help me while I'm writing the story. **\*\***

## 17. Revelations, The Hunt, and the Challenge

### Ch. 17

Mim picked up her favorite bottle of perfume and sprayed it all over her body to ensure that she was fully covered in her favorite scent, a mixture of lilac, vanilla, mint and a few extras. She picked up one of her tubes of pink lipstick and generously smeared it onto her puckered lips to ensure they were completely kissable for her planned activities. She smiled smugly at herself in the mirror and pumped up her purple flowing hair a few times before tossing it back over her shoulder. She was dressed in her favorite body hugging pink satin dress with the low cut neckline. It was cut short hugging her curves and barely left anything to the imagination. She loved her glamour spells more than anything. She never understood how anyone with magic wasn't actively using them. It was her secret and little did they

know what was hiding underneath the facade. She grinned. If only she could get the spells to work on her teeth and her voice, no one would be able to resist her.

The rumors about the women in Storybrooke were not lies. She had not only underestimated the women but the men too. She didn't play games to lose. She played to win and so far these games have been very disappointing with the exception of one tall dark and curly haired man that she would love to have a few rounds of spin the bottle with again. If it weren't for Emma Swan and her stupid rules! She stomped her foot. Today would be the day that she would have her fun. They shouldn't underestimate the Magnificent Marvelous Mad Madam Mim. She would find a way to win no matter what.

"Oh MerMer! It's time to get to Storybrooke! Get the pets ready for travel." she cackled.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

David approached the convent and knocked on the door. It appeared to be empty as he peered through the window. He walked around to the chapel in the back of the building. Even though the curse was broken the fairies still seemed to follow their daily routines while they were in Storybrooke. He entered the chapel and found the sisters were all kneeling in the pews before him with their heads tilted down in prayer. He approached Blue softly so he wouldn't disturb the other women.

"Excuse me Blue. I know this isn't the best time but I could really use a word with you." he whispered.

She held her finger to her lips and nodded in understanding. She crossed herself and stood up in the pew to follow David outside of the chapel.

"What can I do for you?" asked Blue.

"I'm looking to find a way to change a man back who was cursed into dragon form." said David.

"Ah Yes, I've heard about Rumplestiltskin. Pity I know he was on his honeymoon. Without knowing the exact spell or curse that was used to turn him I have no guarantee that this will work but it is worth a try." said Blue.

She reached behind her head to unclasp a chain that held a bottle of fairy dust that hung hidden around her neck.

"There is only one dose here. You must be careful with this because it's the last of it that I could collect here in Storybrooke. There is no guarantee that this will work but it's worth the risk of losing this knowing what we are facing with Mim. If Rumplestiltskin can help us save poor Dr. Hopper and the others I'm willing to sacrifice whatever I can." said Blue.

"Thank you, I will be careful. I need to get back to Granny's before Mim gets here. I would advise you to stay here and be safe if you can. We don't know what she is capable of doing." said David.

Blue nodded and walked back into the chapel to join the others.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

Granny's was filled with the usual lunch crowd. Ruby was chewing on her nails and leaning against the counter. She still looked nervous but Emma promised not to go anywhere until the contest was setup with Mim. Ruby calmed down a bit after she told her that. Henry, Snow, and the baby came down to join her for lunch. She tried to keep things normal for Henry's sake. They had burgers and he told her about the video game he was playing. He advanced five levels the night before.

Her father called and told her he was able to get the dust from Blue. He expected to be back at Granny's soon. That was a relief because she figured that if she were to attempt a rescue with Belle that they should have more than one method to try to change him back just in case the kiss didn't work. They didn't want to be stuck in a strange castle with an angry dragon chasing them. She was also not sure about realm jumping with someone. She would explain the risk to Belle and she hoped that because it was for Rumpel, Belle would attempt it with her. At least they would know if she was capable of making the trip with others and not just herself. That would be important if she were going to be able to rescue any of them.

David arrived just in time. The commotion outside let her know that Mim had arrived. Ruby gave her a wide eyed look and her mouth twisted with worry.

"Ruby, you are going to be ok. Just like we talked about ok?"said Emma.

Ruby nodded.

Snow was comforting Ruby by rubbing her hand over Ruby's back in an attempt to help keep her calm.

"Henry stay here with Neal ok. Remember no matter what happens out there do not leave Granny's." said Emma.

"Don't worry; I'll make sure they are safe. I'm not going anywhere." said David.

"I'll be here too Sherriff." said Granny.

Granny had her crossbow in hand and ready for action.

Marian arrived with Roland and he ran to join Henry in the booth. She kissed him on the head and whispered in his ear. He nodded back and smiled. She looked around but quickly left Granny's to go out to find Robin. Emma felt bad for Marian. She was still adjusting to life in Storybrooke. All of the residents were being kind to her and trying to help but she kept to herself and they only saw her when she came for meals and when Mim arrived. Roland looked so happy to have her back. He was smiling and bouncing up and down on the bench next to Henry. Henry gave him a placemat and a little can of crayons to draw and color the picture of the little bear on it. Henry glanced over

and gave her a thumbs up letting her know he was ok. Roland got to know Henry well when Robin and Regina were spending time together.

They were in luck because tonight there would be a full moon so Ruby could change form into a wolf. Ruby would also have the helpful light of the moon during the hunt. That would mean Mim did as well but Ruby would have the edge knowing the forest here in Storybrooke.

Snow had her arms wrapped around David and she was kissing him as if her life depended on it. She still cringed just a little when she saw her parents kissing especially in public.

"I've got this. Go do what you have to do." said David waving them off and smiling.

Snow smiled and wiped the smudge of lipstick she left on David's face. She kissed baby Neal and walked to join Ruby.

"You have it?"asked Emma nodding to her father.

David pulled up the vial from around his neck and showed her the dust.

"Good, hide it Dad. We are going to need it." said Emma.

"Mom? Ruby? Are you ready? asked Emma.

The bell above Granny's door jingled and Regina and Belle came through. Belle came over to join them and she saw Regina scanning the diner for Henry.

"Mom, I'm over here." called Henry.

Regina went over to see Henry who was also sitting with Roland. She gave Henry a kiss on the forehead. Roland looked up at her smiling.

"I want one too!" he smiled.

Regina bent to kiss Roland on the forehead too.

"That's a beautiful picture Roland." said Regina enthusiastically.

Roland looked up at her grinning and went back to coloring.

She could see the sadness in Regina's eyes. Henry sensed it too.

"It will be ok Mom." said Henry smiling.

Emma felt a lump form in her throat. She swallowed hard.

"Come on are you ladies ready?"asked Emma.

"Be good boys. I'll see you soon." Said Regina with a sad smile.

Regina patted Henry on the back before walking over to join the rest of the women.

Belle, Snow, and Ruby had their arms linked together.

"Ms. Swan I'd say we are as ready as we will ever be." said Regina.

Snow looked back to David who was gently rocking Neal. He was sleeping like a log here at Granny's. Maybe he liked the danger. Emma smiled. He would fit in nicely with their family.

They proceeded out the door and all linked arms together to show Mim that they were united and that she couldn't break them down no matter what she did. They walked over to greet their friends in the square.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

They landed with a thud once again into the center square of Storybrooke. The men were all rubbing the various sore spots after the harsh landing. Mim was laughing and marveling at her own graceful landing. Merlin frowned at her. The men all gathered together in the square after they pulled themselves together. It appeared Mim was in rare form today and seemed to be full of hubris. She was smiling with her toothy crooked grin like she'd already won.

Mim waved her hand and they were frozen in place once again but at least they could be heard. Killian rubbed his back. These landing's were posing a challenge. Robin was steadily talking to Marian and the conversation did not look like something that was meant to be held in a public forum.

He looked over to see the women walking with their arms linked. They looked strong and powerful. Their gaze had strength and they appeared to be a force that would not be broken easily. Emma smiled at him as she got closer. He would never get used to that. His heart fluttered every time she looked at him like that. He winked at her smiling back.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

"Well, Well, Well, it's nice of you to finally show up. Are you forfeiting the games and forming a chorus line?"cackled Mim

Emma was still seething over the events that occurred earlier that day with their men. She wanted to punch her in the face but luckily her arms were linked with her mother and Belle who were holding her back. She also couldn't let on that she knew what Mim had done. She couldn't let her know that she had a way of communicating with the men at the castle.

"Let's get down to business, shall we?"said Regina who was looking at her with such a glare that she was sure that if her eyes were lasers she would have melted Mim to the ground.

"Does that mean I finally get to see the Evil Queen in action? I thought you might have gone soft Honey. You always seem to be running away. I thought maybe those rumors of your magical abilities were just eh? So far I have to say I'm not impressed. "goaded Mim.

"I'd hardly call a miserable excuse for a jack o lantern on legs competition for me." said Regina conjuring a ball of light in her left palm.

Thunder suddenly boomed over head and Mim glared back at Regina conjuring a yellow ball of light in her right hand..

She could feel the tension coming from Regina. This was going to get ugly. Mim was trying to get her to crack but in the process it appeared Regina was getting to her too. Belle locked her arm tighter around Regina's to hold her back. Regina let the light ball die out.

"Mim, you are here to negotiate the game right?" said Snow.

Mim pulled back her ball of light too.

Luckily Snow stepped in because she wasn't going to be able to negotiate at that moment. She was feeling charged herself. She looked at Killian and his eyebrows were raised in worry. She relaxed her shoulders a bit and tried to compose herself. She didn't want anyone to get hurt.

"Is the princess looking to put the tasty prince back into the pot? I'm sure I could come up with something to tempt you." cackled Mim.

She was even starting to get to her mother. Snow glared at her saying nothing but her face and body language was full of emotion.

"It's my contest, leave them out of this. You're here to negotiate with me." said Ruby firmly.

Emma smiled.

"Front and center doctor.!"shouted Mim.

Dr. Whale was pulled to the front of the men. He had a blank look on his face until Ruby looked towards him. He smiled at her and Ruby smiled and waved.

"I'd like to challenge you to a hunt." said Ruby nodding to Victor.

He nodded to her in return and shyly smiled.

"Oh goodie, I love to hunt. Especially Men!" cackled Mim.

"I wasn't finished, I'd like to challenge you to a hunt as a wolf." said Ruby confidently.

"This just gets better and better. I like the way you think Little Red." cackled Mim.

"Same rules as before. No magical help aside from changing into the wolf. No cheating. The first one to find Dr. Whale wins the hunt. If you break the rules you forfeit and Dr. Whale is free." said Emma.

Ruby nodded.

"Rules Rules Rules Emma Swan. You're no fun!" Said Mim putting her finger into her mouth pretending to gag on it.

"If you don't like the rules leave our town and our friends and find somewhere else to play!" said Emma sternly.

"Ok, Ok , I'm game! Mermer what do you say? Can you hide the good Dr.?"cackled Mim.

"Oh yes, I can do that." said Merlin.

"It has to be tonight after the moon is high." said Ruby.

"Ooh even better now, it's in the dark! I hope you ladies are paying attention. This one's got imagination. I Love it!" cackled Mim.

"Do we have a deal?"asked Ruby.

"Yes Little Red we have a deal. You find him you keep him! If I find him he's mine!"said Mim with a big grin on her face.

Dr. Whale closed his eyes .

Mim was strutting back and forth like a proud peacock. She was pumping her hair and tossing it over her shoulder.

"You've got 5 minutes before we depart boys. Make em count Ladies! Mermer I need you?" said Mim holding out her arm for Merlin to join her. He grumbled and walked over in compliance to take her arm. They went for a stroll down the main street in Storybrooke.

Emma observed what was going on in the square.

Marian had been talking to Robin since they arrived. It appeared she was crying. Snow and I walked over to see if we could help. Marian refused and ran back towards Granny's.

"Robin is there anything I can do?"asked Snow.

"She's afraid of the contest. I told her not to worry and to leave me. I'll figure out a way to get out of this somehow without having to put her through game play." said Robin.

"I'll go talk to her." said Snow.

"Thank you my lady." said Robin.

"I'm sorry about this Robin. We'll take care of her." said Emma.

Emma could see Regina heard every word of that conversation. She watched Regina gaze over at Robin and quickly look away when he caught her. Regina and Belle still had their arms linked for support. Belle was whispering to her. It appeared their time this afternoon was going better than she hoped. Belle encouraged Regina to move forward and they turned away and walked back towards Gold's shop.



Ruby was talking to Dr. Whale and she was smiling and twirling her hair on her finger.

"Swan, Swan, are you ok?"asked Killian.

The lilt in his voice brought her back to her own reality.

"I'm sorry. No, I'm not ok. I just wanted to punch that witch in the face. Look at what she is doing. I hate seeing everyone like this." said Emma.

Killian looked at her with concern in his eyes.

" You must be careful. You see what she does with the weather. Merlin told us she likes to conjure bloody tornados" said Killian.

"I've noticed when she gets upset the clouds start rolling in." said Emma.

"She has been careful to hide her magic from us for the most part but we've seen things here and there. This morning was the worst of it. Most of the time she has Merlin do the magic for her. I'm not sure if it is because she can't do it or she doesn't want to." said Killian.

"With any luck this could be over by tonight. I'm working on a plan to get you all out of there but it might take some time. We think we might be able to change Rumpel back. I know we don't have much time so I'll fill you in later." whispered Emma.

Killian smiled.

They could see Mim and Merlin were walking back towards them. She felt the nervous butterflies forming in her stomach again. She hated Mim for forcing them apart.

"Swan, before we go care to create some fireworks?"said Killian grinning and lightly scratching behind his ear.

She smiled and moved forward careful not to touch. She leaned up on her tip toes and pressed her lips gently to his to avoid the impending shock. Sparks were shooting all over the place and they felt deliciously wonderful. She knew they were supposed deter her from touching him but for some reason it didn't affect her that way. He pulled her closer to deepen the kiss and then they were enveloped in a white warm glow. She felt her heart fluttering in her chest. She didn't want that moment to end. She felt safe for that brief moment and then he was gone. They were all gone.

She touched her lips. They felt as though they had been branded.

"Whoa." she whispered letting out her breath.

"Wow Emma that was some kiss. I can't even touch Victor without getting shocked. I can't believe you could kiss him. It's like you had a shield of protection around you. "said Ruby.

Emma smiled feeling a blush creep up on her cheeks. Public affection was not something she ever thought she would do but she missed him

and if that was the only way, she was going to take her chances. They already missed out on so many good moments to miss any more.

"Ruby, you were great! You were strong and confident and you didn't let her get to you. I wish I could say the same about the rest of us." said Emma frowning.

"Thank you, Victor told me he was so grateful to me for doing this. He said he didn't think anyone would care if he was gone. He said he always hoped I would go out with him but was too afraid to ask me. We are going to go out once this mess is all over." said Ruby who was speaking a mile a minute.

"That's great!" said Emma.

"I better get in there and help Granny. The lunch crowd was pretty large today with all the commotion." said Ruby.

"Yeah, I've got work to do too. Make sure you rest up for tonight. You'll be great." said Emma smiling.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

Just like always they landed with a thud back into the room at the castle. Killian was still trying to recover from that amazing kiss. He swore he could still feel the impression of her lips upon his own. He stood up and brushed himself off grinning from ear to ear.

"My boy I knew she was special but that was amazing. Emma broke through the magic and through the protection wards that are holding you. You both should have been shocked back from each other on instant. On three occasions you have barely been scratched and come out unscathed. She shielded you from the fall out of that spell without even trying. Just wonderful!" giggled Merlin.

"She is amazing and she has been learning." said Killian.

"Tell her to be careful. I distracted Mim as much as possible but I'm not sure if that went unnoticed. She will be looking for weaknesses and strengths. I have to admit I've been curious about her magic too. It will be interesting to see just exactly what she can do." said Merlin clapping his hand on Killian's back.

He noticed that Merlin had a flower peeking out from his robes when Merlin pulled back from him. He'd never seen a Snow Lily but he guessed that Merlin wouldn't be carrying around more than one type of flower.

"Anyone thirsty?" asked Merlin who was rubbing his hands together.

He waved his hand and set the table with pints and pitchers of ale.

"Care to join us in some drinks?" asked Killian patting him on the chest.

"Of course my boy ." he winked.

Killian carefully pocketed the flower that he just stole in his coat without being seen. He popped the cork off the top of his rum bottle and took a swig. He knew Emma would be pleased when he told her what he was able to obtain from Merlin.

"Anyone up for a game of dice?" asked Killian.

The men all cheered and gathered at the table to start the games.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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After making sure that Henry was ok with her parents she grabbed the dust from her father and head over to Gold's shop to find Regina and Belle.

She pushed open the door to find Belle scanning over a book and had several other books laid out on the table in front of her.

"There's nothing in this one either. You would think with all of these magic books there would be something in one of them to help us." said Belle.

"Where's Regina?"asked Emma.

"She left. She said she needed some time alone. That last go with Mim took its toll on her. She said that it's hard to fight the dark magic sometimes especially now while she is feeling so vulnerable. She is trying her best to stay light for Henry." said Belle.

"Unfortunately we might actually need her to go dark against Mim. I was glad to see that you were getting along though." said Emma.

"No one was more surprised than me. I'm just glad we are on the same side." said Belle smiling.

"Since it's just you and me let's talk about a plan for tonight." said Emma.

"Ok, were you able to get the dust?"asked Belle.

"Yes, Blue had one vial. She said we had to use all of it and that there would be no guarantee that it would work. It's also the last of it in Storybrooke so we get one change." said Emma frowning.

"Ok, so we wake him with the Lily and then we have two options so far to try to change him back. One is to try the dust and the other is for me to kiss the dragon Rumpel and hope he changes back?"asked Belle.

"Yes, and we should also keep looking for other ways. I wish we could get Merlin to talk. There are risks too. You know that there is no guarantee that this plan will work. I've never realm jumped with another person before. I'm willing to try with you but I've only done it once myself. You would kind of be my guinea pig." said Emma.

"I understand and I'm willing to do whatever you need me to do." said Belle.

"I was hoping you would say that." said Emma smiling.

"Now we just need to get the Snow Lily. If we can get that we might have a chance." said Belle.

As if on cue her pocket began buzzing.

"Swan." said Killian.

"Is everything alright? I'm with Belle at Gold's shop." said Emma smiling.

"Yes Love, better than alright. I've got the flower. Merlin is passed out on the couch at the moment. It was revealed to me in his robes earlier after our crash landing back at the castle. It mysteriously came into my possession." he said grinning from ear to ear.

"Pirate" she said smiling.

"Always, but I'm your pirate." he said raising his eyebrow.

"Great, now I just need to get it. We are going to try \_operation wake the sleeping dragon\_ tonight during the hunt." said Emma.

"Swan, something else you should know. Merlin was very pleased by what happened between us earlier. He said he was able to hide it from Mim because it might have raised her suspicions." said Killian.

"He was pleased because we kissed?"asked Emma.

"It wasn't the kiss, it was the fact that we could do it at all. He said that you broke down magical wards and through spells to protect us during the kiss. "said Killian smiling.

"I did?"asked Emma.

"Yes, you are a marvel Love. If you set your mind to it you might just surprise yourself. Look at what you did without even trying." said Killian.

Emma smiled brightly.

"Tonight before the contest begins I need you to hand me the flower. Belle and I will sneak off once it begins and try to rescue Rumpel." said Emma.

"Ok Swan, I hope you know what you're doing. He is a rather large beast. " said Killian.

"Watch it, you're talking about my husband." said Belle smiling.

"If it doesn't look like it will go well I'll abandon the mission. I promise I'll be safe." said Emma.

"Ok Love, I'll see you later." said Killian.

The mirror shimmered and it was back to her reflection.

"You two are so cute! Like teenagers in love." said Belle.

Emma felt a blush creep up on her cheeks.

"I've never felt like this before. I actually feel giddy around him." said Emma.

"Well looks like we have all the pieces we need. So \_Operation wake the sleeping dragon\_ huh?"said Belle.

Emma smiled.

"As a member of our family you will learn that we are fond of secret missions." smiled Emma.

"Your family, I haven't had much chance to think about that yet since we've only just gotten married. It was always just me and my father." said Belle.

"We couldn't have had a nicer addition." said Emma.

She grabbed Belle's hand and gave it a squeeze.

"Hand me some books maybe something will look familiar." said Emma.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

The men were having fun playing dice and drinking away the day. Merlin was passed out on the couch along with a few of the merry men. If anything this was giving Killian a chance to become friends with the other men in Storybrooke. If his future with Emma was going to be there he couldn't be a loaner forever. She was a princess to these people. He wanted to be a part of her life.

"Whose up next?"asked Killian.

"Why don't you give me a go Pirate?"said Mim suggestively.

All of the men suddenly sobered at her arrival. She came in so quietly that none of them knew how long she had been standing among them. Killian cringed at her comment and his stomach rolled.

She sauntered over to the table where the men were seated.

Killian noticed that Merlin was still passed out and rather than tempt the witch he decided to play along.

"Alright, you want a turn. What are the stakes?"asked Killian.

"I need another man servant. As you can see Merlin is of no use to me. Which one of you boys wants to be the prize?"asked Mim looking around the table.

She surveyed their faces. Each man put their eyes to the ground except one, Archie.

"How about you handsome? I could use a cutie like you around here. How about it? You trust the pirate to play for you?"cackled

Mim.

Archie looked at him and Killian gave him a wink and a nod.

"Ok, I'm in." said Archie.

"One round winner gets the doctor. I get to roll first." said Mim.

Killian looked at Archie to make sure that he was ok with the terms.

Archie nodded.

Killian handed the dice to Mim.

"Kiss em Pirate!"she cackled.

Killian kissed the dice and said a little prayer to the Gods that they would have mercy on him if this didn't go his way. He handed the dice back to Mim.

"Thanks for the sugar. Momma needs a new pair of shoes!"she yelled and rolled the dice.

The men noted her score from the roll. She looked pleased with a wide toothy grin on her face.

She handed the dice to Killian and winked at him. Archie gave him a nod and Killian rolled the dice.

At the land of the dice, thunder started to boom. Merlin was aroused from his sleep. Mim was not happy.

"Sorry, no new shoes today." said Killian smugly.

She glared at him and her eyes were glowing brightly. Lightening was crashing outside the castle.

"Mim, what are you doing in here. After what happened this morning, we had a deal you were not to come in here! If those women find out what you did there will be repercussions." Merlin scolded.

Mim was frowning and she pushed back from the table causing the table to shake. Thunder was booming outside and they could see the windows still lighting up at the top of the room.

"You win today Pirate but I will best you. Just wait and see." She said while grinding her teeth.

"I do believe the good doctor gets to go home." said Killian.

"Thank you." said Archie.

"Mermer, pay the man!" she called and puffed out of the room.

Everyone let out a sigh of relief around the table, especially Archie. The men who were passed out were suddenly sobering up too.

"Boy's I'm sorry. I know this is starting to sound like a broken record but I shouldn't have passed out like that." said Merlin.

He hung his head.

"We know you are under extreme pressure. We have only been here for a few days and already it's taken its toll on us. It's ok. We handled it today so don't worry about us." said Robin.

"Thank you my boy. I appreciate your understanding. Luckily no harm was done." said Merlin.

"Come on doctor let's get you home." said Merlin.

"Excuse Me Archie?"asked Robin.

"Yes, what is it?"asked Archie.

"Please go and see Marian for me when you get home. Help her see that she doesn't have to do this for me. I can't reason with her under the circumstances and she is so distraught that she won't let anyone in town help her. I really just need a friendly face for her to talk to." said Robin.

"Of course. I'll see you all later tonight." said Archie.

"Off you go!"said Merlin.

Both he and Archie disappeared.

"How did you do it?"asked Robin.

"Mate, you could say I was lucky but I'd like to say loaded dice always helps." said Killian with a smile.

He popped the cork on his rum and took a long swig.

Robin shook his head and smiled.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

"What's going on out there?"asked Emma.

Belle went to look out the front windows of the shop.

"It's Archie, he's back." said Belle.

Emma came rushing to the front of the shop.

"How can this be? I thought he was trapped with the rest of the men." said Emma.

Emma pulled the mirror from her pocket and tapped it.

Killian stood from the table and moved to the back corner of the room so that he was hidden from the others.

"Swan?" asked Killian.

"What's going on? How is Archie back?" asked Emma.

"Let's just say I got lucky in a game of dice." said Killian smiling.

"Are you kidding me? She knows that's off limits." said Emma.

She was fuming now. Mim kept pushing the boundaries further and further.

"Is everyone alright? We didn't lose anyone did we?" she asked.

"No Love, the good doctor agreed to the match and we played. The wizard was passed out when she crept into the room. None of us saw the serpent until she was right upon us. We had to do something and he bravely accepted to volunteer." said Killian.

"This has to end." said Emma.

"Aye. I can't talk now Love, it's not safe." said Killian.

The mirror shifted once again and she was looking at herself.

"Did you hear all that?" asked Emma.

Belle nodded.

"That witch has some nerve. How dare she use our men like poker chips. If we could just find some clue about how to defeat her." said Belle.

"I may be able to help with that. " said Regina walking into the shop.

"What did you find?" asked Emma.

"Well after days of reading through my mother's journals I finally found something about her. She is a particularly interesting creature. If you look here she is always under constant illusion. This is what she really looks like. Her façade is not real." said Regina showing them the book.

There was a detailed picture of a haggard looking woman with crooked teeth and scraggly hair. She had long digits on her hands that extended well beyond a normal human hand. There also appeared to be webbing in between her digits. She had short limbs, tiny ears, and a small pudgy nose.

"She is pretty scary." said Belle.

"I think if the men saw what she actually looked like they would be that much more afraid. Yuk! Just the thought of that thing putting its lips all over me gives me the creeps. Little John might be scarred for life if he ever sees that." said Emma.

"Due to the nature of this beast she can't mask her teeth or her voice with magic. She has a venomous tongue and she can poison someone if she chooses to use that. It's documented as being very



dangerous. The venom reacts with saliva. If she were to actually kiss someone they would become intoxicated by her and her willing servant. They can potentially become addicted to her." said Regina.

"What? That is definitely something we need to make sure the men know. Not that any of them would kiss her willingly but can you imagine if my mother missed and that thing kissed my father? Even if my mother won she would have lost!" said Emma.

"Yes, no wonder she has been trying to kiss all of the men. She wants them to become enslaved to her." said Belle.

"Does the book mention an antidote?" asked Emma.

"My mother documented that several of her people in Wonderland were corrupt by Mim. There are only two things that can combat her venom and break the addiction. True Love's kiss or water from the Never Sea." said Regina.

"As in the water from Neverland?" asked Emma.

"Yes, water from Neverland." said Regina.

"That's nearly as bad as the dreamshade poisoning. Rumple was able to create an antidote to that." said Belle.

"Well the fact that he is incapacitated is not going to help us in this situation. We just have to make sure that thing keeps her lips off of the men." said Regina.

Emma's eyes went wide.

"Do you think that is what she did to Merlin? Do you think he knows she is this thing?" asked Emma.

"I don't know. He's been around for a long time and has known her for a long time." said Regina.

"Here, look at this book. The term for what she is Mimargeous Mergosa. She is a sea creature with origins from Neverland. That is likely why the Never Sea water is needed. It also says that her kind is extinct. Apparently Pan made sure of that." said Belle.

"It looks like he missed one." said Regina.

"How did you find this so fast?" asked Emma.

"Well with the lead from Regina it wasn't hard. I've been combing these books for days but I didn't know what I was looking for." said Belle.

"Now that we know what it is, does it say how to defeat it?" said Emma.

"After they determined what the problem was they created the antidote and my mother banished Mim from coming back into Wonderland. There aren't any more details in the journals after that." said Regina.

Worry crossed her face as she looked at the book.

"Maybe we can just banish her from Storybrooke?" said Emma.

"It's never that easy to get rid of someone magical that you don't want hanging around." Said Regina with a smirk on her face.

"You know, I think the reason that Mim enslaved Merlin is because he can jump realms. She may be powerful but it's likely that she crossed Pan at some point. Suppose she got to Merlin before Pan got rid of her and the others. That could be the reason she wasn't there when the others of her kind fell. Who knows how long she has been with Merlin." said Belle.

"I think you're right! I always had this feeling that Merlin was doing the heavy lifting and that she was along for the ride. We have got to get him to drink some water from the Never Sea." said Emma.

"Just to confirm our suspicion does it mention anything about her being in tune with the weather?" said Regina.

"Yes, similar to the mermaids. She can call the weather since she is a sea creature in origin. To me she seems to be kind of like a distant cousin to a mermaid or a siren." said Belle.

"Well I'll be more than happy to filet the bitch myself." smiled Regina.

"If we can free Merlin from her clutches then we can get him to help us. He can put her somewhere so that she won't harm anyone else and she would be stuck there without any way to return and cause trouble. Unless she found a magic bean." said Emma.

"The only way to do that is to get some water from Neverland or have his True Love kiss him. Since none of us knows who Merlin's True Love is we might have a problem." said Regina.

"I'll search the shop. Maybe Rumple has some water here from when he created the antidote for your father. Let me check in back." said Belle.

"We need to warn the others. She continues to find ways to setup new games and could trap someone else. She just released Archie. If that game went bad the poor guy would have been in serious trouble." said Emma.

"I've got it!" called Belle returning with the small vial.

"It looks like enough for one person. Does it say how much someone has to drink?" said Emma.

"It only states that you have to drink it." said Regina.

"I just hope it's enough." said Emma.

"Well there's only one way to find out. We need to get Merlin to drink it." said Belle.

"How are we going to get him to drink it?" asked Regina.

"I found out earlier that I can penetrate the force field. While the hunt is going on I will give this to Hook and ask him to put it into Merlin's drink. Since he is in servitude to Mim he is probably not allowed to accept help willingly so we'll have to be clever about it. He has already dismissed us a few times when we have offered but he still appears to be helping us." said Emma.

"OK, it's a plan. Now we have got to get the word out about her poisonous tongue. I don't want to have to go back to Neverland anytime soon." said Emma.

"Ok, you go on ahead. I'm going to stay here with Belle and keep looking. We need to see if there is a counter transfiguration spell in one of these books. I'm also going to see if I can find any more information about Mim. " said Regina.

"OK, meet me at Granny's tonight. Henry can stay with my parents since the hunt will be so late." said Emma.

"Ok, I'll pick him up in the morning." said Regina.

"Belle can I talk to you out front for a minute?" asked Emma.

Regina sat at the table and settled down with the book that Belle found.

"Belle, change in plans. We would be in a much better position to save Rumpel if we can get Merlin on our side first." said Emma.

"I agree, we will hold off on our plan until we can find out if this water will help Merlin." said Belle.

"Keep an eye on the sky, when the moon is high she will be returning." said Emma.

"Don't worry, we'll be there." said Belle.

Emma nodded and head out the door to spread the word to the town.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

Emma pulled up in front of Granny's and sat in her car. She saw that Archie was surrounded. She needed to tell Killian about the change in plans. She hoped that it was a safe time to contact him. She decided that instead of going through the front door to pop into her room so she could make a quick mirror call and let him know.

It was getting much easier to navigate between the spaces. She already felt secure in her room, well his room. She grabbed the pillow and snuggled it tightly and took in the deep rich scent. That man would be the death of her; she just couldn't get enough of him now that she realized what she was missing. She pulled out the mirror and tapped to contact him.

"Miss me Love?" he smiled.

"Yes actually, but that isn't why I needed to talk to you. Is it safe?"asked Emma.

"For the moment. The men are occupied by teaching Merlin a drinking game. He decided not to leave us alone since Mim seems to be imposing on us quite a bit today. He's been with us since he returned Dr. Hopper" said Killian.

"There's been a change in plans for tonight. We think we might have found a way to free Merlin. I'm going to need your help." said Emma.

"Do Tell Love? You know I'm always at your service." said Killian.

Emma explained what they found out about Mim and that they needed to get Merlin to drink the Never Sea water.

"Of course she's related to the bloody mermaids from Neverland. I should have known straight away. I've never seen anything like her before but all of the signs are there as you've said. I should have suspected when she was controlling the weather." said Killian.

"Do you think you can do it?"asked Emma.

"Oh don't you worry Love, I've got this." said Killian smiling.

"Ok, I'm going to slip you the vial during the hunt tonight. I've got to go down and warn the others about her poison. Whatever you do, don't kiss her." said Emma.

"No chance in that Love. These lips are reserved for you." smiled Killian.

"Good." Said Emma smiling.

"I'll warn the others. See you in a few hours Swan." said Killian.

He shimmered out of the mirror and she was looking back at herself. They had a plan.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

Emma spread the word to the town's people about Mim's venom and suggested that if they didn't need to be out tonight that they remain in their homes and stay away from the hunt. She didn't get any complaints from anyone. They all seemed to understand that Mim was dangerous and unpredictable. Her ability to control the weather scared Emma the most. She certainly didn't want any tornados coming to Storybrooke.

Emma had been practicing magic for the rest of the afternoon with a break here and there to have something to eat or clear her head. She was nearly 2/3 the way through Merlin's book and had been learning a lot of useful spells. There were also quite a few that would require further explanation if she was able to free him. The one she loved the most was to be able to conjure the light ball like Regina had earlier. She felt powerful holding magic in her hands like that. She could see why it was so hard for Regina to give it up. It could be

addicting if it wasn't handled properly but it was a part of her that she needed to accept.

The dwarves also agreed to help in the woods tonight to make sure nothing went wrong. Emma gave them strict instructions to remain hidden from the wolves and not to talk to anyone especially with glowing yellow eyes. They should get out there early. They were to keep the women informed of any wrong doing that they witnessed and not to involve themselves. It would be very dangerous tonight with two wolves on the loose. Grumpy spoke for the men and told her that they were at her service and if she needed anything else that they would be there in a heartbeat.

It was nice to see the town coming together. She felt more and more like Storybrooke was her home every day. Now she needed to get Killian back for it to be complete.

"Emma Honey, are you ok in there?"asked Snow knocking on her door.

"Mom, yes, I'm coming. Sorry just studying. Come in." said Emma.

"The baby is asleep, Roland's tucked in and Henry is planning an all-nighter with his video game." said Snow.

"How was Marian when you saw her?"asked Emma.

"Archie spent some time talking with her earlier today. He told her Robin asked her not to compete for him. He said he wanted her to relax and let him handle this." said Snow.

"How did she take it?"asked Emma.

"She said she would take it into advisement but she really wanted her husband back." said Snow.

"I can't see Regina letting anything happen to Robin. No matter what goes down I just feel it in my gut. Regina will step in to save him." said Emma.

"I know what you mean. Regina cares for him. I know she has been cautious about this. She doesn't want to hurt Robin but I can't see her allowing Robin to throw himself at the mercy of Mim. Now that we know what she is, that would be even less of a possible solution." said Snow.

"Let's go say goodnight to the boys and get down there." said Emma.

Snow hugged her and nodded.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

The moon was rising and Ruby was getting ready. The diner would be closed for the duration of the contest since the town's people were asked to stay home. Granny needed to be with them tonight to help with Ruby if things didn't go well. Her father would take care of

Henry, Roland, and baby Neal tonight. They would all be safe in the room upstairs behind Emma's wards. Snow, Belle, Regina, and Marian would also be coming out to the hunt tonight with her. It was best when the women stuck together and formed a united front against Mim. She had to see that she couldn't break them.

All of the women gathered in the square to wait for Mim to arrive. They wanted to greet her this time. They would like to show her that they had the advantage and that she didn't scare them by just popping in without warning. Granny had her cross bow with her as a precaution. They weren't sure what Mim would be like in wolf form. They knew Ruby learned to control her wolf but it took time.

Ruby was standing in her cloak. She didn't want to change until the rules were properly set for the hunt. She also didn't want to greet Mim in wolf form.

There was a loud pop and the men were sprawled out on the ground. Mim was cackling like usual and Merlin was stumbling forward towards them.

"Good evening ladies." said Merlin tipping his hat.

"Good evening." said Ruby.

"Well Girls, nice to see some punctuality this time. I wasn't sure if you were capable of that, especially you Emma Swan. You are always going on about the rules but late to the contest." said Mim rolling her eyes.

Ruby stepped forward.

"You ready to play?"asked Ruby.

"Aren't you the eager beaver tonight." said Mim.

"Let's just get this over with." said Ruby.

"As you stated, I do like the rules. Are you planning to abide by them? No cheating, No magic beyond your transformation to wolf, first one to find Dr. Whale is the winner of the contest. "said Emma.

"blah blah blah, yes I agree to the rules. Let's get this party started!"cackled Mim.

Emma looked to see Marian was talking to Robin and there was a lot of intensity in whatever she was saying.

Snow, Granny, Regina and Belle were surrounding Ruby to provide her with strength and support for the game.

"Front and center Dr. Whale!" called Mim.

He was once again magically pulled forward. Merlin was standing next to Mim waiting for instruction. He looked to her and winked. The wizard always looked like he was keeping a secret.

"Mermer, you are going to hide him somewhere in the woods. Be sure to pop him somewhere I don't want you making this easy now. You got

it?"asked Mim.

"I know what I'm doing Mim." he said with a huff.

Ruby went over and gave Victor a big long hug. Emma noticed she was secretly taking in his scent.

"OK Little Red, enough with the goodbyes. Let's get this started. I have plans for him later that don't involve you." cackled Mim.

Ruby glared at her. She leaned up and gave Victor a kiss on his cheek but lingered whispering something in his ear.

Merlin grabbed hold of Victor's hand and they shimmered out of sight.

Everyone waited in silence. Emma noticed that Killian was watching her intently. She finally caught his gaze and he winked providing her assurance in their plan.

Merlin shimmered back into existence a few minutes later.

"The prize is ready for the hunt." he giggled.

All of the women huddled around Ruby and gave her a huge hug.

"You can do this Ruby." said Snow.

"Are you ready?"asked Emma.

Ruby nodded.

"Granny can you do the honors?"asked Ruby.

Merlin stood by waiting for the cue.

"When she pulls the cloak Ruby will become the wolf." said Emma.

Merlin nodded.

Mim waved her hand and nodded her head. She still had this smug expression on her face.

"OK then on the count of three. 1,2,3." said Merlin.

Granny pulled the cloak from Ruby and she changed into a wolf with a soft brown coat and a white fluffy tail. Her eyes were glowing under the moonlight. She looked back at the rest of the crowd. Mim changed into a wolf with a coarse purple coat. She had menacing yellow glowing eyes. They both appeared to be in control but Granny still had the crossbow ready just in case.

"The count of three you are released to the hunt. 1, 2, 3! shouted Merlin.

The wolves darted into the woods to search for their prize. She hoped for Dr. Whale's sake that this went well. She moved to stand by Killian.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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POV changes to Ruby

There was a light breeze in the air blowing at her fur. She remembered that Victor smelled of alcohol and a distinct version of aftershave that mixed well with his own unique scent. It could have been cologne but it smelled really nice and she liked it. She put her snout into the air and took a drag to see if she could find any traces of it. Mim darted by her into the woods but she wasn't sure if she was on his trail or not. She had to rely on her instincts and not chase Mim. She checked in a few directions before she set on a trail. She could detect him even if it was a feint scent. She felt the cool earth on the pads of her paws as she rushed through rustling woods avoiding large obstacles that were popping out as she passed them.

She caught a glimpse of Happy in a tree nearby and kept going. She knew the dwarves would be out in the woods but she wasn't sure where they would be. She kept moving and the scent was getting stronger. She kept looking around but she didn't hear any sign of Mim. She passed through the rushing water of the creek and her fur was matted down under her belly. She took a moment to shake off the water and picked up his scent again. She continued in the new direction in search of Victor.

The scent was getting stronger and stronger but the surroundings were silent. She didn't know where Mim was but she had a feeling that she was close to her. She passed another dwarf who was peeking out from behind a bush. He was camouflaged but she was certain it was Doc.

She started rushing faster as the scent grew stronger. She pushed and pushed now that she had him. There was still no sign of Mim anywhere. That was when she spotted him. He was hidden under a bush. At that moment she felt like she couldn't run any faster but she pushed harder. She was going to win. She felt excitement and adrenaline moving through her. All of the sudden the purple wolf appeared out of nowhere in front of her. She pushed harder and they arrived just at the same time in front of Victor. What would they do in case of a tie?

Victor was looking back at her terrified. She never wanted him to see her like this. He crept out from under the bush. The dwarves all started arriving from their different hiding spaces throughout the woods.

Mim was growling at Ruby and approaching Victor with an evil look in her eyes. Ruby Growled back and charged at her pushing Mim back against the bushes. Mim rushed back forward towards Ruby. Ruby wanted to keep Mim away from her friends so she chased her back further into the woods. Mim evaded her and ran back towards Victor.

"She Cheated!"shouted Grumpy pointing at Mim.

Thunder started booming overhead and clouds started to roll in. Merlin popped into existence right in front of them.

"What happened?"asked Merlin.



He started petting Mim to try to calm her down.

"There, there girl. We'll get to the bottom of this. Let's not do anything hasty now ok?"said Merlin.

She looked up at Merlin and whined.

"Let's take this party back to the square shall we?"said Merlin.

He popped all of them back to the Square in front of the men and women who were waiting for the results.

Granny came forward and covered her with her cloak. She felt the transformation back into herself and stood from the ground.

"Thanks Granny." said Ruby.

Granny patted her on the back and went back to join the rest of the women.

Ruby looked back to see Emma standing in front of Killian, Marian in front of Robin, and Snow, Belle and Regina standing off to the side waiting with Granny.

"She cheated!"shouted Grumpy.

Mim transformed back into her human form. The thunder was booming again and streaks of lightening lit up the sky.

"That's a lie dwarf!"shouted Mim.

"We were all watching in the woods sister!" shouted Grumpy.

" We saw Ruby running through every step of the way. Mim was nowhere near Dr. Whale" said Happy.

"Ruby had it in the bag. It was Happy over there who saw Mim in human form hiding in the bushes. She wasn't even a wolf until she heard Ruby running fast." said Grumpy.

"Yeah I saw her change back to the wolf and then she popped in to run with Ruby." said Happy.

"That's breaking the rules sister!" said Grumpy.

She stood there taking all of this in. She knew she found him and that she didn't hear Mim the entire time she was running.

"I agree, there were no signs of her until I spotted Victor and then she appeared out of nowhere." said Ruby.

Mim stood there silent tapping her foot on the ground, arms crossed and a grimace on her face. The thunder overhead was booming louder and louder. Lightening struck a nearby tree causing it to go up in flames.

"Mim, is this true? You know that you were not to use magic during this contest. If you changed to human and back to wolf that breaks the rules." said Merlin.

Mim began stomping her feet and jumping up and down. The thunder was booming and the fire truck sirens were going off. The fireman rushed to the town square. Suddenly car alarms were going off too with the strength of the thunder booms.

"Mim you have got to calm down or you'll kill everyone." said Merlin.

He moved behind her and started rubbing her shoulders to calm her down. The thunder was lessening and the lightening subsided. A light rain started to fall on the square.

"FINE!" she yelled and stomped her feet.

She looked like a toddler throwing a tantrum.

"I cheated! I cheated! I cheated! I didn't think it would be so hard." she whined.

"Victor goes free!"shouted Ruby.

He grinned widely and let out a breath of relief.

Merlin pulled Mim into an embrace and the clouds began to dissipate.

She ran to Victor and jumped up to hug him. He pulled her in as tight as he could hug her.

"Thank you Ruby. I intend to make good on my offer for a date if that is still alright with you?"said Victor.

"You bet it is!"she said.

He released her and they joined hands. They walked over to join the rest of the women who were waiting. They were shouting and cheering for her.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

**\*\*POV change back to Emma\*\***

Emma moved towards Killian to exchange the Never sea water with him for the flower while Mim was distracted. Merlin was watching them during the hunt so they couldn't make the exchange without him noticing.

"Hello Love" he said.

"Hi, you ready? Let's do this." she smiled.

She moved in closely like the other times. She looked to the side to make sure Mim and Merlin were out of view. She prepared herself for the impending shock of the kiss. She held tightly to the vial in her hand ready to put it into his pocket. He stood smiling at her, his hand cupped lightly around the flower. She leaned forward and touched her lips lightly to his sending sparks around them. He pulled her

forward deepening the kiss and she felt the warm glow form around them again. She pushed the vial into his coat pocket and she felt him push the flower into hers. She begrudgingly pulled back from the kiss and stood silently in front of him chewing on her bottom lip. His grin matched hers. They were like a pair of love struck teenagers.

Shouting brought them back from the amazing haze that surrounded them.

"What's going on?"she asked Snow.

Snow looked shocked.

Killian looked concerned as he stood staring at Marian in the square. She was on her knees in front of Mim begging her to let Robin go.

"Oh No! What is she doing?"said Emma.

She rushed out to the square; Snow and Regina came along with her. Belle remained behind with Ruby.

"I'll go with you, just please let him go. I don't belong here. He does." cried Marian.

Mim looked pleased and Merlin looked puzzled.

"Marian No!" shouted Robin.

"Marian, please we can get through this. You don't have to do this." said Emma.

"Emma Swan, let the woman talk. I can always use a good servant." said Mim.

"Emma, I can't win. I can't do anything. Robin will be stuck in her servitude. Roland needs him in this land. I'm no good without him here." cried Marian.

"Marian, I can't let you do this. You can't do this. Please." pleaded Robin.

"That's enough!" shouted Regina.

There was a gasp among the people in the square.

"Finally, The Evil Queen speaks!"cackled Mim.

I ran to Marian to help her off of her knees and pull her back. She protested and pulled forward.

"Marian, Roland needs you. Please come over here with us." said Emma.

Robin sighed in relief at her gesture.

"Is the Evil Queen willing to play for the thief?"asked Mim

Regina looked at Robin and he was shaking his head.

"Yes, include the rest and you have a deal." said Regina smiling wickedly.

"All but the Pirate. I'm sure Emma and I will have fun playing for him." said Mim winking at Emma.

Regina looked in her direction. Emma was glaring at Mim shaking her head.

"Fine!" said Regina.

Mim jumped in the air.

"Yeah, we're going to have a magic fight! Please say we're going to have a magic fight. "she yelled clapping her hands together with excitement.

"Regina please don't do this! Don't stoop to her level." said Emma looking at Killian.

"Ms. Swan, step out of my way if you know what's good for you." said Regina through gritted teeth.

She pushed back and stood in front of Killian.

"I'm sorry" said Emma looking at him with a sad smile.

"It's ok Swan, you tried." said Killian.

She reached over to hold his hand. This time there were almost no sparks and just a warm glow emanating as they stood there silently watching the two titans go head to head.

Snow, Marian and Belle were standing next to Regina now providing her support.

"You want a magic fight? Bring it on. You won't know what hit you!"said Regina pulling a fireball up in her right hand.

Thunder started booming overhead.

"I'll be in touch! Mermer we're leaving now! Toodles!"shouted Mim blowing kisses towards Regina.

She turned to Killian.

"Swanâ€¦|" said Killian fading out.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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## 18. Impulses

### Ch. 18

Emma turned to see Marian embracing Regina who appeared to be seething. Snow and Belle stood there with their mouths gaping open

both unable to believe what they were witnessing. Emma rushed over to try to contain this situation.

"I'll never be able to repay you for helping my family. Thank you Your Highness." said Marian nodding her head.

Regina's eyes were wide and she blinked hard. She gently peeled Marian away and stood silently staring at her with a focused gaze.

"Uh, I told you Regina has changed. We're here for you ok. Don't go doing anything crazy without talking to us. Why don't you uh go inside and check on Roland." said Emma.

"Yes, Marian, let's get you something to drink and then I'll go with you to check on the boys." said Snow ushering her away from Regina.

"Thank you again Your Highness." said Marian looking back as Snow pushed her along.

Regina nodded.

Ruby and Victor followed behind them. That left her with Belle and Regina in the square.

"Regina, Are you ok?"asked Emma.

"No, I'm not ok. I had to watch that dolt beg for Robin's release while throwing herself at that witch. Then I was goaded into fighting for a man that I will never be able to have. I am NOT ok." said Regina.

"You were very kind to Marian and you didn't have to be. I know how hard that must have been for you." said Belle.

Emma stood there looking down at the ground. She couldn't take looking into Regina's eyes at that moment knowing she was partly to blame for the pain she was feeling.

"Every bone in my body wanted to make sushi out of that fish. How dare she challenge me like that! She doesn't know what she begged for or who she is dealing with." said Regina.

"I thought you handled that pretty well considering the circumstances. Henry would be proud of you. "smiled Emma.

Regina began pacing back and forth in front of the square trying to calm herself down.

"How about you Emma, Are you ok? You know she is holding onto Hook to taunt you. She sees something there and she wants to exploit you. It also doesn't help that he has been taunting her too." said Belle.

"I don't like situation anymore than you do. We have to get smarter. So far she has been pushing us to make rash decisions with these games by threatening the people we care about. I was able to get \_Hook \_the Never sea water. Let's hope he can get Merlin to drink it and that it works." said Emma.

"I'm going to go home and mentally prepare myself. I need to think about this contest. I know I read something in Mother's journals about her contest with Mim. "said Regina.

"Don't worry, Henry will be safe. You go ahead and let us know if you need anything. Belle and I will go back to the shop and pick up where you left off earlier on the research." said Emma.

Regina nodded and left the square.

"Belle, are you ok? You've been so great about supporting everyone else. You must be going crazy." said Emma.

"I am, Rumpel and I have survived a loss in the worst way possible and have come back stronger. I can only look at this as a small set back and keep hope that he will be back with me soon. It's meant a lot to me that you have all been so supportive and that you have let me help you. Keeping busy has been my saving grace." said Belle.

Emma pulled the flower from her pocket to show Belle.

"We made the switch after the contest was over." said Emma.

"Is that it?"asked Belle.

Emma nodded and smiled.

"Do you trust me?"asked Emma.

"Yes, of course." said Belle.

"Belle, hold my hand and close your eyes. I want to try something ok?"asked Emma.

Belle grabbed her hand. Emma closed her eyes and focused on Gold's shop. She forced her mind to think in between the spaces and pushed forward. She opened her eyes and they were standing in the back room of the shop.

"Emma, that was amazing!"said Belle.

"Well I thought we should try in this realm if I was going to attempt to take you to the Enchanted Forrest." said Emma.

"Why do you even travel any other way?"asked Belle smiling.

Emma shook her head and smiled.

"Let's get to the books, there has to be more to know about her and the type of magic that she practices. I know it's dark but maybe there are weaknesses?" said Emma.

"You take this stack and I'll take this one." said Belle.

Emma felt the mirror in her pocket and gave it a little squeeze. She missed Killian and hoped he would contact her soon. That was another tough loss for Mim and she was worried that she would do something to take it out on the men. She was also curious about when Killian planned to give Merlin the \_drink\_. All she could do is sit and wait

now so she hit the research as Belle suggested.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

The men landed with a thud back into the castle.

"Does this type of travel ever get easier?" asked Little John.

Merlin was sitting in a chair at the table and he was being rather quiet. Killian rubbed his neck and pulled himself up off of the floor.

"Well Mate, it appears Regina has stood up for you after all." said Killian.

Robin gave him a sad smile.

"Yes, but look at the circumstances. Marian has no idea about Regina and I. She looked so helpless begging on her knees in front of that witch." said Robin.

"Regina has been handling this with the utmost discretion. I'm sure she would prefer not to be the one to let Marian know about your dalliance." said Killian.

"Dalliance, it was more than a dalliance. I was falling in love with Regina. Seeing her in pain is killing me. My heart is twisted in a knot. I never got to speak to her after the party. She just left. How am I supposed to handle this?" said Robin.

"I don't know Mate." said Killian shaking his head.

The two men joined the others who were already sitting at the table having some drinks. Their number was growing shorter after each game and if Regina were to win the next contest he would remain alone unless Emma was to find a way to save him sooner.

"My boy, that was quite a scene back there. I can feel your pain." said Merlin.

"Is there no other way out of this? I can't impose upon Regina to do this. She's already hurting and now she has to fight." said Robin.

"Mate, you forget who you are talking about. She isn't a damsel in distress, she is the Evil Queen. A very powerful and strong woman, who I might add typically, gets what she wants." said Killian.

"You're right. She isn't the Evil Queen anymore. I know her differently than you see her. She was vulnerable and confided in me things she never told anyone. I feel as though I've betrayed her." said Robin.

"My boy, if her reputation is correct she loves to fight and she will not go down easily if at all. The pain may just make her stronger. I warned Mim that she should be careful in your realm. She is so full of herself. She failed to listen. Her quest to be the best is pushing her. I'm just worried that when she fails she will destroy your

land." said Merlin.

"Destroy Storybrooke?"asked Killian.

"Yes, my boy. She does not like to lose." said Merlin.

The room suddenly got quiet as they all processed what Merlin just told them.

"How about we play some of those drinking games that you boys showed me earlier? I could use a drink!"said Merlin smiling and rubbing his hands together..

Killian could see he was trying to distract them. He needed to get Merlin to drink the Neversea water so whatever kept him there long enough to get him to drink, he would do.

"I'm game Mate." said Killian.

"Me too! Let's play!" said Robin.

The merry men cheered and settled in to the table setting up a game of quarters.

Killian still hadn't been able to tell the rest of the men about Mim and her secret, let alone about the plan to free Merlin from her clutches. Merlin had been with them every minute since Archie was returned. He was going to have to get Merlin good and drunk so he could reveal the secret.

"Get the rum! This is how men play." said Killian raising an eyebrow and grinning at the men.

Killian pulled the vial from his pocket and palmed it in his hand. He would need to trick Merlin into drinking it. He might have accidentally bumped the table with his knee a few times during Merlin's turn forcing him to drink more frequently than the others. Merlin appeared to be good and drunk. When Merlin missed the last play Killian switched the rum shot for the shot of the Neversea water. Merlin took the shot back and then grimaced.

"Something's wrong with the rum boys." hiccupped Merlin.

Killian winked at Robin stopping him from saying something.

"Mate, why don't you go and rest up. I think you've had enough." said Killian.

Merlin stumbled up from his chair and pat Killian on the back.

"Good idea my boy! Wake me if Mim wanders in here. She could be lurking so be careful." he whispered with slurred speech.

Robin gave Killian a side glance raising an eyebrow. Merlin managed to make it to one of the couches with the help of the Merry Men and he passed out with a smile on his face.

"Are you going to fill me in on what's going on now?"asked Robin.



Killian explained to the men what he learned from Emma earlier in the day about Mim and her origin, that Mim's kisses would lead to servitude and that he just dosed Merlin with the Neversea water.

"We need to hope for the best Mates" said Killian.

"That's extraordinary. How do we know if it worked?"asked Robin.

"I don't know Mate. Far as I know it's just water. Nothing magical about it." said Killian.

"He's completely buggered." said Robin.

"I guess we wait. Who's up for some dice?"asked Killian grinning.

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Emma and Belle spent a few hours going through the books before she needed to take a break. It was late and she was tired. It was a long day and it started with trouble way too early for her. She pulled up outside of Granny's. Her father was seated at a table alone. She walked in and slumped in a booth to join him.

"Hi Honey. You look tired." said David.

"That coffee looks good. Yeah I am. Been a long day." said Emma.

She waved her hand and a cup appeared in front of her and she smiled.

"I'm not sure I'm ever going to get used to that." Said David shaking his head.

"Where's Mom, is everything alright?"asked Emma.

"Yeah, they are all sleeping for the moment." said David.

"Neal seems to be doing fine. Maybe the colic is over?"said Emma gripping her cup to take another sip.

David smiled.

"Your Mom told me what happened with Marian and Regina." said David.

Emma nodded and looked down into her cup.

"Yeah, it's not good. I'm waiting to hear from Killian. We were able to make the swap. I got the flower and he got the Never sea water." said Emma smiling.

David pulled the vial out from under his sweater and unclasped the chain. He handed it to Emma..

"The dust? Thanks! Now I have all the pieces I need to try to wake Rumple." said Emma yawning.

"Honey you should get to bed. You need to rest. You never know what

tomorrow will bring." said David.

"You gonna be ok?"asked Emma.

"Yeah, just taking in the peace and quiet." said David.

"Ok, Goodnight Dad!"said Emma giving him a hug.

She would never get over the fact that she could give her parents a simple hug goodnight.

She popped out of the diner up to her room leaving David smiling.

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They had been playing games for awhile. The merry men were passed out in their usual sleeping spots. He and Robin had gotten good and drunk. Killian kept checking back to see if Merlin was awake. He still appeared to be out cold. He was waiting to contact Emma to let her know if the Neversea water worked. He was afraid he might have to wait until morning at this point. It was getting really late or so it seemed. Time seemed to stall while they were in the castle. He rolled the dice once more.

"Oh, I win!"yelled Killian.

"I'm sure it's all Luck. Riiiight." said Robin.

"Oi, what are you trying to say." smiled Killian.

"Nothing, Pirate." mumbled Robin.

"Drink Thief." he said.

"Well Hello boys! You're up rather late this evening. Look at poor Mermer I guess he's had too much to drink again. Who's up for a game with me?"asked Mim.

Killian and Robin sat with their mouths gaping open. They couldn't move. They were afraid the serpent would strike either of them if they moved. She seemed to love to sneak up on them.

Killian looked back and Merlin was still passed out. They needed to figure out how to wake him.

"We aren't in the mood to play games tonight." said Robin.

"Whyyyyyy Not! You seem to be having a good time and I want to Playyyy!" She whined.

"We've decided to retire for the evening." said Killian looking down.

"Just one little game with me pretty please? I promise I'll make it worth your while." said Mim pouting out her lip.

She piled on that disgusting lip goop for the occasion. It turned Killian's stomach every time he had to look at her. He could feel

himself sobering up at the site of her.

"Not interested." said Killian.

"I wasn't talking to you Pirate."she said acidly.

" I was talking to the Thief. What if I could make you an offer you can't refuse?"said Mim batting her eyes.

"I think you've done enough already to help me this evening." said Robin sarcastically.

"One roll of the dice, if you win, you go home and if I win, I get a kissssss." said Mim smiling.

"Don't do it Mate. You shouldn't be in here witch." said Killian through gritted teeth.

"Hush." Said Mim waving her hand at Killian and he was silenced.

"Just one roll of the dice and you get to go home, no questions asked, no games to play, no women to fight over you. " said Mim batting her eyes and leaning in towards Robin.

Killian tried to tell him not to do it. He wanted to get up and wake Merlin but he found he was frozen in place. She had him. He kept mouthing **\_\*\*No\*\*\_** to Robin over and over again but he wouldn't look at him.

Robin looked at Killian and he winked at him.

"Fine, you have a deal. "said Robin.

Killian rolled his eyes. She had him, the bloody witch, had his mate and he could do nothing but sit there and watch.

Mim picked up the dice blew on them and rolled. She sat there looking smugly at him.

"You're turn Honey." cackled Mim.

Robin picked up Killian's dice and rolled.

Mim popped up off the chair and started dancing wildly. She was bouncing up and down clapping her hands. Thunder was booming outside.

"I WIN!"she yelled.

Robin looked at Killian with wide eyes.

Merlin jumped up from the couch.

Killian felt himself unfreeze and he could speak again.

"No Mate No!"said Killian.

"Pucker Up!"said Mim.

"Mim, what are you doing in here. I told you that you weren't allowed in this room!" yelled Merlin.

"He agreed to the game and he lost Mermer. He lost so he has to kiss me." Said Mim jumping up and down.

Merlin looked at Robin with sadness in his eyes.

"Is this true my boy?" asked Merlin.

Robin looked to Merlin and nodded hanging his head.

Merlin shook his head.

Killian felt like he was going to be sick.

Robin was suddenly pulled forward magically towards Mim. He was standing in front of the evil serpent. She grabbed his shirt collar and pulled him towards her smashing her gooey pink lips against Robin's. She appeared to suck his face as she rubbed herself against his body. Robin's eyes went wide open and he tried to pull back.

Little John opened his eyes to see what was happening. He quickly closed his eyes and fell back down.

"That's enough Mim! Back to your room!" shouted Merlin.

She stepped back with a mischievous grin on her face wiping her lips.

"Thanks for playing! Pleasure doing business with you!" she cackled and popped out.

"What'd you do?" shouted Killian.

He hopped up from his seat and walked towards his mate.

Robin stood there still as a statue with his eyes wide and his jaw slack.

He shook him side to side and nothing. He slapped him in the face and he came to.

"Mate, are you alright?" asked Killian.

Robin wiped the pink goop from his lips and face onto his shirt sleeve.

"I'm, I'm alright." He stuttered.

Robin went to the table and poured himself a glass of rum and drank it to the bottom.

"My boy, I'm so sorry. I don't know what came over me. I can't believe I passed out like that. Why does my mouth taste like I've been eating mountains of fish? I'm going to talk to that woman. She needs to understand the rules!" said Merlin stomping his foot.

"It was all for nothing." said Robin.

"Why'd you do it?"asked Killian.

"I thought the dice were loaded!"shouted Robin.

Killian laughed loudly.

" I told you luck was on my side Mate." smiled Killian.

He pulled the dice from his pocket and dropped them on the table.

"What?"asked Robin with his mouth hanging open.

"Loaded dice." said Killian raising an eyebrow.

"Oh bugger off" said Robin.

He poured another glass of rum and chugged it down trying to wash the taste out of his mouth.

"Well mate, the question is did she kiss you with tongue or without?"smiled Killian.

Robin groaned.

"I was afraid of that." said Killian patting Robin on the back.

Killian sat with Robin while he drowned his sorrows in drink. Robin passed out along with his Merry Men.

No sign of Merlin, Mim and the rest of the lot were passed out drunk. He missed Emma and he needed her. He was a bit tipsy but he had to let her know what happened. He walked to the couch in the back of the room that he claimed for himself and tapped on the mirror hopeful she was still awake or easily woken.

"Killian? It's late. Is everything alright?"said Emma her voice thick with sleep.

"Swan! I miss you. Something awful happened." said Killian

She sat up quickly and blinked her eyes awake.

"I'm awake. I'm awake. What happened?"asked Emma.

His face was crestfallen. He looked as if he was pouting. His eyes were closed. He went to speak but she couldn't bear it.

"I'm coming to you. Just wait, I'm coming to you." she said hopping out of the bed.

"Wait, what? Swan it might not be safe. What if she comes back?" said Killian.

"Comes back?"asked Emma.

She could feel the heat rising in her body. She went to bed wearing one of his shirts. She wanted to be wrapped in his arms and that was

the closest thing to it. The only article of clothing he had in his satchel.

"Well, she was here and nowâ€¦" said Killian.

"Stop, I'm coming don't tell me anymore. Do what I told you to do before. Lie back and put the mirror over your heart. Think of me and I'll be there soon." said Emma.

She was pissed. All she knew was Mim was in the room with them again and something awful happened. She felt fire burning under her skin. She picked up the water on her nightstand and took a sip. She closed her eyes and concentrated on his heartbeat. She thought about their kiss earlier in the day and she pushed herself between the spaces and through the realms until she opened her eyes and was standing in front of him.

"Killian." she whispered.

He opened his eyes and looked at her cautiously.

"Swan? Is that you? Is that my shirt?"he smiled.

"Yes", she smiled.

He hopped up from the couch and scooped her up and held her tightly in his arms.

"Gods I missed you." he whispered.

His lips were crashing down on hers and she felt like she couldn't get close enough. She wanted to devour him. His lips were so soft and she could taste the rum. She was quickly brought back to reality when she remembered where she was. She put her hands against his chest pushing back lightly.

"Wait" she said panting.

She closed her eyes. She was so worked up from anger and need, she had to stop might explode. He was breathing hard too and he pulled her close to him in a tight embrace.

"I've never been happier to see someone in my life." he whispered.

She peeked out from his embrace and surveyed the room for any prying eyes.

"What happened in here?"she whispered.

"Oh, they're all drunk and passed out." said Killian.

"Don't let go ok?"she asked.

"Not a chance Love." he said putting tiny kisses on her head.

"Please tell me what happened." she whispered.

"Come here, Love" he whispered.

He pulled her down onto the couch with him and held her against his chest. He told her what happened with Robin and that Merlin showed no signs of being cured after drinking the Neversea water.

"My God, Killian! That means that Robin is in her clutches now and we have no cure. The only way to free him is to kiss his True Love!"whispered Emma just a little bit too loudly.

Little John was stirring in his place. She snuggled closer to his chest. He was smoothing her hair with his hand.

"Well which one do you think it is?" chuckled Killian.

Emma looked up from his chest to see him grinning and she swatted him.

"This is not funny!"she said.

"Merlin showed no sign of being cured. All he said was that he felt like he had eaten a mountain of fish when he woke up. It looks like we'll have to figure out another way to save the wizard." said Killian grimacing.

"Oh No, Regina is going to flip out when I tell her." whispered Emma.

There was a noise coming from the hall.

"Did you hear that?"asked Killian.

"I can't leave you here. I can't risk this anymore. She has some kind of vendetta against me. She will keep pushing you." said Emma holding him tightly.

"Swan, I'll be fine. I've got to stay here with Robin and the Merry Men. We still need to rescue Rumplestiltskin and we have yet to free the wizard. "said Killian.

"You're right, I know you're right. I just miss you." said Emma snuggling closely.

"Believe me the site of you in my shirt has me fighting to hold you right where you are Love. I wouldn't mind a repeat of the other night." said Killian grinning.

Emma smiled and leaned up to kiss him gently. It quickly escalated to something more. She felt his warm hands caressing her body and she wanted more.

A lamp crashed from the table and some of the men started rousing.

"Swan you better go before they see you." He whispered closing his eyes.

She kissed him once gently letting it linger on his lips. She gazed down at him and carefully put the mirror over his heart.

"Always remember I'm with you." she whispered.

He smiled and squeezed her tightly once more placing a kiss on her cheek.

She closed her eyes and cleared her mind as she prepared to travel back between the spaces through the realms. She hated to leave him but she knew he was right and she had to get back before they were caught.

"Swan?" he whispered.

"Yeah, I'm here. Dream of me?" she said.

"Aye, that I will Love." said Killian.

She snuggled under the covers holding the pillow tightly dreaming of her pirate.

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## 19. Chasing away the Darkness

\*\*A/N : This was a bit of a tough chapter to write. I needed to explore Regina and her feelings to prepare her for the contest. I hope you enjoy this. Let me know what you think about the story so far. There's more to come.\*\*

### Ch. 19

Regina woke up in the middle of the night. She sat up and leaned over the side of her bed. She felt sick to her stomach. She was angry and sad about this situation with Robin. She just wanted to rescue him from the witch and bring him home with her. She had been reading her mother's journals for days and they were also tugging at her heart strings. She wasn't sure why she waited so long to read them. Just seeing her mother's thoughts on the page and getting the magic tips and notes in the margin of the page were comforting to her. She never had the relationship that she hoped with her mother. The absence of her mother's heart left her cold to her until minutes before she died. She closed her eyes as she thought of her last words, "This would have been enough. You would have been enough." She felt the loss of her mother's love for a long time but those words left a fresh wound when she realized what she could have had with her. It was Robin who encouraged her that she could open her heart again. He was the first person other than Henry that she felt she could love. She felt the tears sliding down her cheeks. She did love him and now he was out of reach. She would rescue him and give him back to her. She got up to stretch her legs and walked to the window. The light of the full moon was shining down over her yard. She looked to her apple tree which seemed to give her strength. She brushed the tears aside and gripped her hand into a fist. If Mim wanted a fight, she would be happy to give it to her. She smiled widely feeling the darkness creeping up inside of her.

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Emma woke up early the next morning. The events of last night were weighing heavy on her mind. She missed Killian and just spending a little time with him did wonders for her. She hated that he was so far away. He was her closest friend. She missed having his assuring words to guide her through these challenges. The people of Storybrooke were all on edge and they were dealing with a crazy woman.

She needed to see Regina but she was a little nervous about it. She didn't know when Mim would show up today to discuss the details of the challenge but she had to warn her about Robin's new plight. Even if Regina were to win Robin back from Mim he could still belong to Mim due to the venom from the kiss. She didn't even want to mention this to Marian. Marian already seemed so stressed being in Storybrooke that this news could potentially send her over the edge.

She had an early breakfast with Henry, and her parents. She took Snow aside after breakfast and filled her in on what happened the night before. To her relief Snow offered to go with her to speak to Regina. David was going to look after Henry for the day. Henry was more than enthusiastic to continue dominating his video game in the comfort of Granny's. Granny spoiled him like he was her own grandchild and since her parents missed the last year of his life they were over compensating too. She was happy that he was getting to be a regular kid. Well at least as much of a regular kid as he could be in Storybrooke.

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They stood in front of Regina's door. This was starting to feel like déjà vu. This would be the third time this week that she had to reach out to her early in the morning with bad news.

"Don't worry Emma. Regina has been doing really well with everything that has been going on. She may be angry but she is a smart woman and wouldn't do anything hasty." said Snow.

"I hope you're right." Said Emma.

She didn't even have a chance to knock at the door. Regina opened the door and she was pulling on her coat and had her bag in her hand. She looked startled when she noticed them standing there.

"Are you going somewhere?"asked Emma.

Regina smoothed her hair down and straightened her coat.

"Well there are some things I need to do at the office and I'm late if you must know." said Regina.

"Regina, something happened last night and we need to talk to you about it." said Snow.

"Is it Henry? Is he alright?"asked Regina.

"No, Henry's fine. He's safe at Granny's happily playing his video game." said Emma.

Regina pulled her door shut.

"OK, well walk and talk. Like I said, I'm late." said Regina who was pushing past them towards her car.

"Regina, its Robin." said Snow.

Regina stopped in her tracks and turned around.

"What about him?"asked Regina.

"Last night when the Men returned to the castle the plan was that \_Hook \_was going to get Merlin to drink the Neversea water. They decided to play drinking games with Merlin and switch out one of his drinks with the water so that he wouldn't know they were trying to help him. They were all really drunk by the time Merlin took the shot of the water. Merlin passed out." said Emma.

"But he was their only protection from the walking sea bitch." said Regina.

"You're right, he was." said Snow shaking her head.

"The guys continued to play games and Mim surprised them with a visit again. She challenged Robin to a game of dice. If he won you wouldn't have had to play the games with Mim and he would have gone free and not caused you to bear his burden. He thought he was playing with loaded dice so he took the challenge. He lost and her prize was that she got to kiss him." said Emma.

Regina closed her eyes. She could see she was shaking.

"How dare she?" shouted Regina.

Regina conjured a fireball in her hand and played with it contracting it and expanding it looking for a place she could release it.

"Don't do anything crazy." said Snow.

Regina tossed the fireball towards a watering can in the yard causing it to blow up.

Emma and Snow shielded themselves from the blast of bits.

"When I see that fish I am going to flambÃ© her. She will be nothing but a pile of bones when I am done with her." said Regina disappearing in a puff of purple smoke.

"I didn't get to tell her about Merlin and the Neversea water." said Emma looking at Snow with wide eyes.

"I think it would be best if we just let her be alone for awhile. This is a lot for her to process." said Snow.

Emma nodded.

"Let's get to Gold's shop and find Belle. She's been staying there since Rumpel has been taken." said Emma.

"I should really be getting back to Neal soon." said Snow.

"Ok, then we should take a shortcut. "smiled Emma.

She grabbed Snow's hand.

"Close your eyes" said Emma.

Snow smiled and closed her eyes.

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Killian woke up as the light came shining through the windows. There was no sign of Merlin. Robin and the Merry Men were all still passed out around the room from the previous night's activities. He smiled at the thought of Emma wearing just his shirt last night. Gods he missed her. His heart felt so full of love. He didn't know how much he missed that feeling until she came into his life. All she had to do was look at him and he swore his heart skipped a beat, but he could feel again. For such a long time he felt nothing and he allowed revenge to cloud his judgment and weigh him down. He didn't want to feel anything. He couldn't understand how he could still be alive and yet those that he loved were so unlucky. The pain of loss was completely overwhelming. He wouldn't take this feeling for granted, his heart beating was a reminder now that he was very much alive and fully capable of loving her as much as she would let him. He smiled at the thought of her lips touching his, the softness of her hair, and her hand laying on his chest as she snuggled in close to him. He couldn't get enough of her. He needed to get out of this place.

He got up and walked to the table to pour himself a drink. That was when he noticed him. Merlin was sound asleep in a chair close to where the door would be if it were visible. The site of the old wizard startled him and he knocked into the table causing one of the glasses to topple over and crash to the floor.

"ohh ohh, I'm awake, I'm awake." shouted Merlin.

"It's alright, the witch is not here. Just a bit of an accident." said Killian.

"I trust your night went well my boy?"asked Merlin.

"Aye." said Killian grinning from ear to ear.

"Oh, yes well a visit from a loved one could do anyone some good." he smiled.

Killian gave him a startled look.

"You know then?"asked Killian.

"Ah yes my boy. I know about Emma's visits. I can feel it when she breaks my wards you know." said Merlin.

"But you didn't say anything? I thought you were in Mim's charge and required to report activity to her?"asked Killian.

"Ah yes, well my boy I've taken on Emma as my apprentice you see. I can't break that bond before I've even had a change to solidify it now can I?" he said as he picked up a glass and took a look sip.

"No, I suppose not. How about you?" asked Killian surveying the old wizard for any signs of change.

"Throbbing headache and a dry throat." he gurgled sipping more of his drink.

"Well too much of a drink can do that to a man." said Killian.

"Yes, Yes that is true but as they say a bit of the hair of the dog that bit you can help." said Merlin gulping loudly.

"Morning Mate." said Killian as Robin approached the table.

"Not so loud." said Robin.

"You too my boy?" asked Merlin passing him a cup.

Robin picked up the cup and gulped it down, only to pick up the pitcher refill it and drink again. He held up his cup in celebration.

"Hair of the dog! Cheers!" said Robin holding up his glass and then gulping again.

"Cheers Mate." said Killian raising his glass.

"Will Mim be joining us today?" asked Robin.

Killian gave him a sideways glance.

"No, no my boy she will be preparing for the battle with the Evil Queen today. She is likely up in the bathtub. She spends a lot of time in the water. Not sure how the damn cow isn't waterlogged for the amount of time she spends in there." said Merlin.

Killian looked at Merlin raising an eyebrow.

"So you don't know Mate?" asked Killian.

"What's that my boy?" asked Merlin.

"She's a sea witch." said Killian.

Merlin dropped his cup.

"A what?" asked Merlin.

"She's a type of sea witch. One kiss and her venom will ensnare you to her." said Killian.

"Don't remind me." groaned Robin putting his head down on the desk.

"Hooow, How did you come to know this?" asked Merlin.

"My Swan found the information. She warned me to tell the others not

to kiss her but this daft fool had to go and play with her last night. Now we have a bigger problem than we had before." said Killian. They he raised his glass to Robin and took a drink from his cup.

Merlin got up and started pacing back and forth. He was rubbing his chin and talking to himself in what appeared to be multiple languages.

"I can't believe this. How could I have been so stupid for so long. I should have known." asked Merlin.

"We can't be certain the effects of the venom or what happens to the person she kisses. We'll soon find out though." he said pointing to Robin.

"Yes, Yes. Makes sense I suppose." said Merlin pacing once again.

"There is a cure for the venom but it's not easy to come by." said Killian.

Merlin stopped pacing providing Killian with his full attention.

"What would that be my boy?"asked Merlin.

"Well the ladies found two possible cures for her venom. One was to drink Neversea water and the other is a kiss from your true love." said Killian.

Merlin looked deep in thought.

"You don't suppose you've kissed the sea witch have you?"asked Killian.

"I, I don't know. I can't remember." stuttered Merlin.

"Just how long have you been with her Mate?"asked Killian.

"I don't know." whispered Merlin.

"How do you know if you've fulfilled your debt if you can't remember how long you've been with her?"asked Killian.

Merlin looked crestfallen. He was standing there with his mouth hanging open. He walked to the table and took a drink from his glass.

"I suppose that I wouldn't know." he said.

"What if I was to tell you that last evening I substituted one of your drinks with the Neversea water?"asked Killian.

Merlin turned to look at him with his eyes wide.

"You did what?"asked Merlin smiling.

"Emma provided me with the Neversea water after the hunt last evening. We needed to try with you to see if you were in fact

poisoned by the witch. We wanted to save you but it didn't appear that the water had any effect on you, Mate." said Killian giving him a sad smile.

"My boy when water is an elixir to ailment, in this case poisoned by venom, it takes a bit of time to work its way through your body to heal it. Since all I had was a vial's worth it may take awhile longer. No Hocus Pocus with that." giggled Merlin.

"So you think it could still work?"asked Killian smiling.

"Yes, Yes I do my boy!" said Merlin clapping his hand on Killian's back.

"Great, then there is hope for you yet Mate. You may not have to take turns kissing the ladies after all. That is unless we can't get any Neversea water." said Killian.

"Bugger off. I don't know what you are talking about. I feel fine. When did you say Mim would be coming round?"asked Robin picking his head up from the table.

Merlin shook his head.

"I think the effects of the venom are starting to kick in." said Killian taking another drink from his cup.

"I've no idea what you're talking about. What'd you mean venom? I've not kissed anyone but I might like to take a crack at Mim if she comes round." said Robin giving him a wink and a smile.

"Don't you see my boy, it appears one effect of the venom is that it makes you forget that you've been afflicted by it. You'd never know to find a cure." said Merlin.

"So then, it might seem if you were in fact kissed by the sea witch you'd have likely forgotten you've been afflicted then?"asked Killian.

"I'm afraid you could be right my boy, but now I have hope thanks you and your clever girl." said Merlin.

"Did you say Mim would be coming back? Do you think she'd fancy another game?"asked Robin.

Killian rolled his eyes.

"My boy, I'd say she will be rather busy today so how about you have another drink?"said Merlin.

"Aye, Mate drink up." said Killian rubbing his eye brows and shaking his head.

"I'll keep her busy my boy, don't you worry. If I can in fact be free of her I would certainly owe you a debt." said Merlin.

"I suspect that you will be spending quite a lot of time with my lady if in fact she will be your apprentice. I feel that your time with her will be payment enough for me. I believe you've already helped both of us more than you could possibly imagine." said

Killian.

Merlin smiled.

"Ok, try to keep the boys busy. No more games with Mim if she happens to slip my grasp today. Keep that one occupied no matter what happens today my boy. I'll be back to check on you later. First let me clean up this mess and give you some proper food and drinks." said Merlin.

He waved his hand in the air tidying up the room and setting out a new spread on the table. Then he shimmered out of the room.

Killian walked to the back corner of the room and pulled out the mirror tapping the pattern.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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They popped onto the street in front of Gold's shop. The closed sign was still in the window due to the early hour. Emma felt the buzzing in her pocket.

"Mom, its Killian." she said.

Snow nodded.

"Killian? Are you ok?"asked Emma.

"Yes Love. I just wanted you to know that Merlin was here this morning. He was surprised to learn of Mim's origin. I spoke to him about the cure for the venom affliction. He was enlightened by the news. It appears that one effect is that the person she kisses soon forgets that it happened. That doesn't give them the opportunity to free themselves as they've no idea that something happened to begin with." said Killian.

"So, did he seem any different today?"asked Emma.

"No, but he explained that the water needs to cleanse the person's system so that they are healed. There would be no visible magic involved. "said Killian.

"Oh, so that explains why you didn't see a change." said Emma.

"He complained of a headache today and said that his mouth tasted of fish. I suppose that could be a sign of it working." said Killian.

"Ok, so now we wait." said Emma.

"Also you should know that Merlin knows you've been to the castle. He said he can feel it when you break his wards." said Killian.

Emma looked alarmed.

"Do you think he will tell her?"asked Emma.

"No Love, I think our secret's safe." said Killian.

Robin groaned.

"Robin, the poor bastard, is starting to show signs that the venom is catching hold of him. He is seeking out time with the bloody sea witch willingly." said Killian.

"Oh No." said Emma.

"Merlin plans to keep her occupied for the day. We'll all keep an eye on him here to be certain he is alright. Perhaps it might be best to keep him drunk." said Killian.

"Whatever you need to do please keep him safe, Regina is pissed. If something happens to him she could level the town." said Emma.

"Ah, she's a bit hotheaded that one." said Killian.

"Yeah, don't remind me. She demonstrated that on a watering can this morning." said Emma.

"Well, I'd advise you to stay out of her path of destruction if you can." said Killian.

"I'm heading to Belle's now." said Emma.

"Ok Love, be careful." said Killian.

"You too." said Emma smiling.

He shimmered out of the mirror.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

"Did you hear all of that?" asked Emma.

"Yes, poor Robin." said Snow.

"Let's go in and find Belle." said Emma.

The door was unlocked so they went in. The bell above the door jingled as they entered.

"Belle, Are you in here?" called Emma.

"I'm back here, be right up." called Belle.

Belle came bounding up through the doors.

"Is everything alright? What's happened?" asked Belle.

Emma explained to Belle what happened the previous night and this morning with the men and also this morning with Regina.

"Do you think Regina is alright? What are we going to do?" asked Belle.

Snow looked to Belle with a surprised look on her face.



"Well, Regina is a resilient person but she is hurting. We just have to make sure we help her when we can. She hasn't always been someone to easily accept help from others." said Snow.

"We'll keep an eye on her." said Emma nodding.

She realized that she neglected to tell her mother that Belle and Regina had been spending so much time together.

"That poor man, I can't believe he had to kiss \_that thing\_. Yuk!" said Belle.

"Keep in mind they don't really know what she looks like." said Emma.

She picked up the book and showed the picture to her mother.

"Wait, that's Mim? Yuk is right." said Snow sticking out her tongue and grimacing.

"Mimargeous Mergosa to be exact." said Belle.

"Well, at least there is hope that maybe the Neversea water could still work. Right?" asked Snow.

"Yes, we have to wait and see but if not we should have our plan ready. If we let Mim and Regina fight Storybrooke might not be standing at the end." said Emma.

Emma's phone began buzzing in her pocket.

"Sherriff's department." said Emma.

Emma closed her eyes and shook her head.

"Ok, I'll be right over." said Emma.

"Emma, what is it?" asked Snow.

"Apparently Regina is not fine. She is over by the old quarry and she is blasting things. The dwarves were working in the mine and they started to feel rumbling. They came rushing out of the north side and saw Regina. Grumpy said she looked upset." said Emma.

"We better get over there." said Snow.

"You ladies up for some magical travel?" asked Emma holding out her hands.

They smiled and grabbed her hands preparing for the magical pull.

Emma closed her eyes and thought about the quarry. She carefully navigated in between the spaces and imagined putting them down outside the north side of the mine. She didn't want to pop up directly next to Regina while she was wielding magical fireballs. They appeared just where she imagined and saw Regina kneeling in the field, head in her hands sobbing.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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**\*\*Regina POV\*\***

She had to get away from them. She could feel it. The darkness was growing strong within her and she needed to fight it. She was angry. She wanted to take it out on someone but that wasn't who she was anymore. She was trying to be good. She needed to find a way to deal with her emotions. After blowing up the watering can she had to leave. She couldn't even look at them without thinking of her pain and the rage was just growing bigger and bigger. She went to the only place she could think of where she could release the rage without blowing up the town. If Snow could practice shooting arrows, surely she could pretend she was blasting the evil witch.

She conjured a target in the field to practice on. She created a fireball channeling all of the rage within her. It felt good to feel the power in her hand growing. She imagined Mim's smirking face and blasted the target. Splinters of wood flew everywhere. It felt good.

She continued conjuring the targets one by one. Each time she felt the darkness rage and she would destroy the target. Before she knew it she was not only conjuring Mim but others she was angry with. She was seeing their faces one by one, Rumplestiltskin, Zelena, Snow, Emma, Marian, Robin, Cora, all of their faces were coming at her fast. She could feel that emptiness creeping in. It was starting to overwhelm her. She fell to her knees. She pinched her eyes closed tightly and thought of the only person that could help her stop this, Henry. She closed her eyes and thought of his sweet adoring face. She could feel the tears start to flow down her cheeks. Her heart was becoming full again. She was letting the rage go and the darkness was leaving. She put her head in her hands and sobbed. She needed to release this pain, this feeling that she tried so desperately not to feel for such a long time, the loss of love was too much.

"Regina, are you alright?" called Snow.

She looked up through watery eyes to see Emma, Snow and Belle running towards her in the field. She brushed the tears away from her eyes and stood up from the field.

She was immediately tackled by the women as they arrived. She closed her eyes, allowing herself to feel their embrace and allowing them to comfort her. The tears began to flow again. They stood together for awhile. They were silent and just held her until she was able to speak.

She pulled away slowly and flattened her coat down and looked up to see them all standing with her. They weren't staring they were looking at her with understanding.

"Thank you." said Regina.

"It's going to be Ok." said Belle.

Emma nodded.

Snow reached out and grabbed Regina's hand.

"How did you know where to find me?"asked Regina.

"Grumpy called me. He and the dwarves were in the mines. They heard the blasts." said Emma.

Regina nodded.

"It's a good idea to get in some practice." said Emma.

"Yes, do you want some help?"asked Snow.

Regina smiled and wiped away the remnants of the tears on her face.

"I could use some targets." she laughed.

Snow gave her a sideways glance. Emma and Belle laughed.

" So last night Hook gave Merlin the Neversea water. It didn't appear to do anything. " said Emma.

"So, the cure didn't work?"asked Regina.

"Well, we didn't think so but he spoke to Merlin this morning. He let him in on our little plan to try to rescue him and he told us that the water would take time to heal him of the venom. He also had no recollection of kissing Mim or how long he'd been with her." said Emma.

"I see." said Regina.

"There's more. Robin seems to be starting to show effects from the poison. He starting to forget about the venom and the kiss." said Emma.

"Can you blame him? I'd want to forget I kissed that fish too." said Regina.

"He's also looking for her. I suspect that one of the effects of the poison makes the victim want to be around her." said Emma.

Regina nodded.

"Poor Merlin, who knows how long he's been trapped with that evil witch." said Belle.

"Yes, we've got to save them." said Snow.

"Do you have a plan?"asked Regina.

"We were just going to discuss that when I got the call from Grumpy. As long as Merlin is a minion of Mim he won't be able to free Rumplestiltskin. We have got to keep her occupied to allow that water to work." said Emma.

"I'll set the challenge for tonight so that we have more time for him to heal. How do we keep Robin safe in the mean time?" said Regina.

"Merlin is going to keep Mim busy today so that she isn't anywhere near the men. \_Hook \_and the Merry Men will make sure that Robin stays away from her if she happens to show up. I told them not to play any more games with her no matter what she offers them." said Emma.

"So the offer still stands, Regina, do you want help?" asked Snow.

"Yes, I've realized that being out here and trying to battle with my demons alone is probably not the best thing for me to do right now." said Regina.

Snow squeezed her hand tight.

"Emma, you and Belle should go back to town in case Mim shows up. I'll stay with Regina. Call us if we need to get back." said Snow.

"That's a good idea. Ready Belle?" asked Emma.

Emma and Belle grabbed hands and popped out.

"I see she has been practicing her magic skills." said Regina.

"Yes, she seems to be getting better." said Snow smiling.

"I need you to do something for Me." said Regina.

"Ok." said Snow.

"I need you to take my heart until after the contest. I need you to protect it. The feelings that I'm having are setting me off in too many directions. I'm worried that my judgment will be clouded or worse that darkness will creep in and that I won't be able to stop it." said Regina.

"Of course, I'll make sure it's safe behind the wards." said Snow.

"Thank you." said Regina.

Regina conjured a new target in the field.

"Ok, let's melt this witch." said Regina conjuring a fireball in her right hand preparing for target practice.

Snow  
smiled.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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"Mermer! I need you in here right now!" called Mim.

Why was he serving her again? He could feel the pull lessening to continue his daily routine. Maybe the Neversea water was actually working. Maybe she did kiss him. The details of the game he played with Mim were elusive and she has kept that scroll and wielded it over him for as long as he can remember. In fact he can't even

remember what day it actually is or when he actually tracked time last.

"Mermer! Now!" she called.

"I'm on my way!"he called shuffling along the corridor to her room.

The old bat has had him hopping daily doing things that a normal man, let alone a wizard of his caliber should be doing for a person. Oh, those horrible foot rubs! Ugh! He shuddered at the thought of touching her enormous feet. That never seemed to bother him before. He just did it, just did anything she asked.

"Finally!" she cackled.

"I'm here, what is it?"he asked.

"Can you prepare the pets to go to Storybrooke? We are leaving as soon as I can put on my face." she said.

"You do realize that the Evil Queen is not going to be happy when she finds out that you tricked Robin into playing with you." said Merlin.

"Mermer, if you don't tell I won't tell." She cackled.

"You should prepare yourself for the worst. You know her reputation." said Merlin.

"Don't you worry your pretty little head Mermer. I've got this. The saying \_Long Live the Queen\_ won't apply today." she cackled.

"I hope you're right." said Merlin.

"What's eatin you? You've lost the pep in your step Mermer. You really need to lay off the drinks. I need my man servant attentive and ready when I need him. Just you keep that in mind." said Mim.

"Just how long do I have left on this contract exactly?"asked Merlin.

"Oh you know silly. Just what it says. "said Mim.

"What exactly does it say?"he asked again.

She pulled the contract from her makeup vanity and unscrolled it showing him his signature.

"You see your name right here? That says you belong to me. That's all you need to know. Now take care of the pets!"she said.

"Okie Dokie." Giggled Merlin.

He realized he had always just accepted her showing him the contract and leaving the subject alone. He needed to play up appearances. He watched her rolling up the supposed contract and placing it back into her vanity. He was going to need to get a look at that contract. If it was bound by magic or blood the Neversea water will not make a

difference he would still be trapped but now he would be present, which would make his days that much less pleasant. He had the feeling he was living in a fog for a very long time. He didn't know what effects the venom still had on him but suddenly his life was starting to get a lot more vibrant.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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Emma and Belle popped into the shop.

"Emma, I don't think I'll ever get over traveling that way. I'll have to talk to Rumple about this." said Belle smiling.

"Yeah, it is pretty cool." said Emma.

"Poor Regina. I wasn't expecting to see her like that." said Belle.

"I know." said Emma frowning.

"It's not your fault you know." said Belle.

"Isn't it?" asked Emma.

"Emma if you hadn't saved Marian at some point Robin would find out that Regina was responsible for his wife's death. That doesn't exactly make for a good relationship. The way I see it, if Regina is his true love, well fate has a way of working things out. I can attest to that. My husband died and came back to life. I think you gave Regina a chance at happiness that she wouldn't have had if you didn't save her." said Belle.

"Yeah, I guess you're right. I just don't like seeing her that way." said Emma.

"She's ok right now and knowing your mother she will make sure that she stays that way." said Belle.

"Yes, she does have that affect on people." said Emma smiling.

"So what should we do?" asked Belle.

"Well, you've been doing great so far with the Storybrooke travel. Do you think you would be up for a trip to the Enchanted Forrest?" asked Emma.

"Of course! When do we leave?" asked Belle.

"It's a bit tricky since we can't tell anyone we are doing this. We need to time it just right because we don't want to get caught. I've been practicing but I'm still not sure about Mim and her magic. I don't know how powerful she really is and I'm worried I can't take her." said Emma.

"Emma, I have no doubt that Mim will have met her match if she tries to tangle with you." Said Belle.

"I hope you're right." said Emma.

"OK, then we need to figure out how to keep Mim distracted long enough to get into the castle." said Belle.

"Maybe we should do a test run." said Emma.

"You mean go to the Enchanted Forrest now?"asked Belle.

"Yes, that is exactly what I'm saying. We should at least know if we can do it before tonight." said Emma.

"Ok, I'm ready if you are. Where are we going to go?"asked Belle.

"Well, since we've both been to the Queen's castle I say we go there. Let's focus on the entryway in the main hall. Close your eyes and take my hand ." said Emma.

"Ok." said Belle.

Emma closed her eyes and thought about traveling between the spaces. She focused on the Queen's castle. The last time she was there she was in the dungeon and she watched what she thought was her mother being burned at the stake. Both of those memories were very painful to her but she felt them deeply. She focused on moving through the realms and then opened her eyes.

"You did it!"said Belle.

"We did it." smiled Emma.

She took a brief look around. The castle looked a lot more worn down since the last time she was there.

"It looks just like we left it. From the forgotten year, before your parent's cast the last curse." said Belle.

"Do you think anyone is here?"asked Emma.

A creaking sound came from the upper level.

"I'm not sure I want to find out." said Belle.

"Right, let's get back. Same thing but focus on home ok?"said Emma.

"Gotcha." said Belle as she grabbed her hand and closing her eyes.

They appeared back in Gold's shop just in time. Mim arrived in the square. They heard her shouting in the square.

Emma pulled her cell phone from her pocket and called Regina.

"You better get over here quick. The witch is back." said Emma.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~  
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Emma and Belle moved out into the street. Seconds later Regina and her mother appeared in a cloud of billowing purple smoke.

"Whoa! That's some way to travel." said Snow.

Emma and Belle moved up to join them. Killian, Merlin and the Merry men were standing behind them. Robin was staring at Mim longingly. Emma looked around for Marian but she wasn't there.

"Look who finally decided to show up. Quite a bit of hype don't you think Queenie. Your theatrics don't scare me." said Mim.

"Listen you bitch, the only reason you aren't a pile of dust at this moment is because I decided to let you live so if I were you I would hold your tongue." said Regina through gritted teeth.

Thunder clouds started to roll in. Mim narrowed her eyes at Regina.

Regina narrowed her eyes looking back at Mim. She conjured a purple energy ball and had it ready to go.

Merlin stepped up between the titans.

"Ladies, Ladies, now we can settle our differences amicably. No need to destroy each other right here." said Merlin.

"Yes, let's keep to the spirit of the games. So far we've been able to play them and keep things calm." said Emma.

The clouds began to depart and Regina doused her energy ball.

"No hard feelings Queenie." Cackled Mim.

Regina shot her a glance raising one eyebrow.

Emma looked back at the men who appeared to be silenced once again. Killian looked worried.

"Why are they silent again?" asked Emma.

"Mermer can't you do anything right?" asked Mim.

"Sorry sorry, things happened so quickly that I forgot." said Merlin waving his hand in the air.

"Mim, you can play with meeeee!" called Robin.

The women turned quickly and Regina closed her eyes tightly gritting her teeth.

"Later Honey!" called Mim blowing Robin a kiss.

He reached out to pretend to catch it.

Killian rolled his eyes.

Merlin slapped his hand to his forehead and waved his hand once more silencing Robin.



Snow grabbed Regina's hand.

Emma mouthed the words Thank you to him.

"Would you like to explain to me what that was about?" said Emma playing coy.

"Ms. Swan I believe we are here to set the terms of our contest. Let's just get this over with." said Regina.

She could see her mother grimacing as Regina's grip got tighter.

"Queenie is right, let's get this party started." said Mim.

"We will have a magical duel tonight when the moon rises. We'll do it out by the quarry. The last woman standing wins." said Regina.

"The contest winner will get Robin and his Merry Men. No cheating. Magic must be contained to the quarry. Let's keep destruction to a minimum shall we ladies." said Emma.

"Deal! Ok, Mermer back to the castle! I need to prepare" said Mim happily.

Emma looked back to Killian and he was reaching for her but they disappeared.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

## 20. Clash of the Titans: Regina's battle

\*\*A/N: I hope you like this chapter. I would love to hear from you. We are almost to the end of our story. Thank you to everyone who has been reading along with me. I hope to have the next chapter up soon.\*\*

Ch. 20

The men appeared back in the castle but surprisingly they landed softly this time. Killian heard a crash outside the room. He looked over to see Merlin laughing as the old wizard moved over to the large dining table.

"Mermer, easy on the landing!"shouted Mim so they could all hear her.

"That felt good." giggled Merlin.

"Feeling better then Mate?"asked Killian smiling.

"My boy, for the first time in a very long time I'm starting to \_feel\_ again." giggled Merlin.

"I've heard from those who were part of the Dark curse in Storybrooke that many of them had foggy memories of what happened and time was of no consequence. Perhaps your affliction to the poison did the same for you?"said Killian.

"You could be right my boy." said Merlin smiling.

Robin and the Merry Men were sitting around the table looking rather grim about what was to happen during the contest tonight. Robin kept looking over his shoulder as if he was searching for someone. Things were not looking good.

"Boys, I believe a celebration is in order!"shouted Merlin rubbing his hands together happily.

They all looked at him with wide eyes. Merlin waved his hands and a large feast appeared in front of them on the table. There was enough food and drinks to feed an army of men. The Merry Men quickly perked up at the sight of the libations and began to dig in; all but Robin who had his head down on the table with a rather grim expression on his face.

"Cheers my boys!"called Merlin raising his glass.

"To live and fight another day." said Killian raising his glass tilting it to the wizard before taking a drink.

"Mermer! Where are you? I need you!"shouted Mim.

Killian looked around the room to be sure that Mim was not present. She seemed to be able to raise her voice to a level that could be heard from anywhere.

"I must go. I need to keep up appearances. Can't have her come sniffing around in here again after you boys now can I?" grumbled Merlin.

He pat Killian on the shoulder and disappeared

"Poor Bastard", he whispered taking another sip from his glass.

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Emma walked over to the other women. They were trying to keep Regina calm. She noticed David walking out to the square to join them. She was feeling uneasy about the way things went down while Mim was here. She missed Killian and she didn't get to say goodbye.

"Well, that didn't go exactly as I planned." said Emma.

"Did you see what she did to Robin? The man is acting the fool." said Regina.

Regina conjured a fireball and tossed it at a nearby trashcan and everyone ducked for cover.

"I'm going to destroy her!"shouted Regina.

"Regina, you have to calm down. You don't want to destroy the town do you?"asked Snow.

"I know you want to beat her but let's try to keep Storybrooke standing while you do it. I think the quarry was a good idea. It's

far enough away from the town that if she tries anything funny we can contain her." said Emma.

In a distance they saw Marian running out to the square.

"Did I miss them? Did I miss them?" called Marian.

Regina rolled her eyes.

"I need to get out of here. I can't be near her right now. I'll see you tonight." said Regina and she puffed out in purple smoke.

"Did I miss them? Was Robin alright?" asked Marian breathless.

"Yes, they were here and left rather quickly." said David.

"Roland was napping when I heard the commotion. I came as soon as I could." said Marian frowning.

"The contest is set for tonight at the quarry. Everyone appeared to be ok so don't worry." said Emma.

"It might be a good idea for you to wait here with Roland at Granny's during the contest. David and the boys will be here. Roland loves hanging out with Henry." said Snow.

"But I want to be there with Robin when they arrive. We've already been apart long enough." said Marian.

"I'm going to advise that everyone stay away from this battle. There is too much risk and someone could get hurt. Merlin will make sure the men are ok." said David.

"I understand but I'll not promise anything." said Marian.

She shook her head and departed back towards Granny's.

"That Poor girl. Marian! Hang on, I'll come with you." called Belle.

"So everyone is Ok? asked David.

"Yes, we're just a bit on edge but we'll be ok. Regina had some dark moments today. How are the boys?" said Snow.

"They're fine. Ruby is hanging out with them up in the room. I thought it would be best if Henry didn't see Regina negotiate today knowing how high the emotions would be. " said David.

"Good Thinking. I'm sure that helped her too." smiled Snow.

"Come on, let's go see our boys." said Snow smiling.

"I still can't help smiling at the sound of that." said David grabbing onto Snow and giving her a soft kiss on her cheek.

Emma smiled. Her parents were sickeningly sweet and she loved it. They headed to Granny's to see their family. She liked the sound of that; she was finally a part of something.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

Merlin walked in to find Mim in the bathtub full of bubbles. She had a green mud mask slathered all over her face, if that was actually her face, he thought. Now that he knew that she was a sea witch he understood why she spent so much time in the bath tub. He breathed out a sigh.

"Finallllllly! What took you so long? Don't make me tighten the leash." she said laughing.

"ummmh ,what is it?"he grumbled.

"I need you to wash my back. Would you be a dear and use the giant scrub brush over there. Don't forget to use my favorite bath scrub. The one that smells like lilac!" she cackled.

"mhmf." he grumbled.

He was in hell. Gods that woman's voice was grating. How is it that he didn't notice this before? He kept wondering how long he'd been blindly doing whatever she wanted. These were not the tasks of a master wizard. No man, woman or beast should be subject to doing this kind of work for the likes of her. He shuddered at the thought but he had to keep up this charade. He couldn't let on that he knew anything was different. If that contract was bound by his blood she could have him boxed up for the remainder of his days and no one would be the wiser. Often wizards put those types of magical clauses in and they could be enacted with a simple word if a person didn't comply.

"Come on now, Chop chop! I don't have all day." she said.

He gritted his teeth and picked up the bath scrub and squeezed a hefty amount onto the brush. Thank goodness the brush had a long handle. He didn't think he would be able to handle the close proximity. His stomach was already turning at the thought. He felt the effects of the venom were wearing off faster and faster now. He was also starting to remember how much he despised her. Mim and her silly games and contests, he never would have agreed to have played. She must have tricked him. He pushed the brush over to her back and rubbed it along her skin. He felt himself gagging and choked it back. Her skin appeared to be porous and scaly in the water, even a bit translucent if he looked closely. How could he not have noticed that she was a sea creature before today?

"Ooh, yeah that's the spot. Harder! Yeah Yeah!" said Mim.

"Mmmh." he grumbled.

"What's gotten into you? You worried I can't take that little doll in a fight? " asked Mim pouting her lips?

"They don't call her the Evil Queen for nothing." said Merlin.

"Child's play. It won't even be a contest. She'll be a puddle before she even gets out a puff of her puny magic. Queenie will go down like a sack of Potatoes!" giggled Mim.

He waved his hand and a loud crash sounded in the hall.

"What was that?"asked Mim.

He pulled back the brush and put it on the counter.

"I'll go check and make sure that everything is ok." said Merlin rushing out the door.

"Fine, you can make it up to me later Honey. You know you can do that thing I like!" she yelled.

"OK." he called shuddering at the thought.

He picked up the metal tray from the floor and put it back up the table. He quickly made his way back to the room with the other prisoners. He wouldn't be doing anything more for the witch if he had his way after tonight. He popped out of the hall and back into the room with the men.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

The men were all seated around the table drinking and talking. The Merry men were getting livelier by the second. Robin still had a sad look on his face but at least he ate something and was now drinking. The men tried to get him to play but he was acting as if he didn't even know them. Robin continued to drink in silence. Killian noticed Merlin immediately. The old wizard had a look of disgust on his face when he entered the room.

"Oi Mate." said Killian.

"I need to speak to you alone, come my boy." said Merlin motioning his hand.

Killian excused himself from the table and walked with the wizard to the back of the room over to the place in the room he carved out for himself.

"At your service Mate." said Killian.

"I'd like you to contact Emma so I can speak to you both." said Merlin.

"Mate, is it safe? Are you certain we won't be found out?"asked Killian.

"My boy, I can feel her pull lessening by the minute. I'm slowly starting to feel contempt for her growing and replacing the reverence that I once felt. She won't learn it from me if that's what you are worried about. That's why I need your help. I don't want to be here any more then you do. Especially after what I've just had to do." said Merlin sticking his tongue out and grimacing.

Killian raised an eyebrow.

"You don't want to know. Trust me." said Merlin.

Killian pulled the mirror from his pocket and tapped it to call

Emma.

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When they got back to Granny's they sat down as a family to have some cocoa and get a quick bite to eat. The plan was set. They would meet at Granny's tonight so they could go to the quarry together. It was better when they went as a united front. Her father would keep an eye on the boys and Marian. They were finally able to convince Marian to stay back when they showed her the charred remains of the trash can in the square. Once the contest was underway Emma and Belle planned to sneak away to the castle. Snow would keep an eye on Regina and make sure that she didn't get out of control.

Glimpses of the Evil Queen were showing today and she was getting worried that Regina would backslide. Regina had been doing so well for so long. Henry called Regina to make sure she was alright. He said she seemed down and was happy to hear from him. She told him that she had been baking since she got home to try to settle her nerves. Snow suggested that maybe Henry could go keep her company. Both she and Henry agreed that it would do Regina some good to have his company and he loved her home made cookies.

David agreed to take Henry to visit Regina. She would bring him back to Granny's before the contest. She hoped that Henry would help keep Regina calm. He seemed to be able to get through to her when no one else was capable of doing it. She was counting on it because Regina out of control was not a person she was fond of.

She decided to head back to Killian's room and study for awhile. She was learning so much. There were a few things she didn't understand but she was making notes and hoped she would get to ask Merlin about them someday. She walked into the room, picked up Killian's satchel and pulled out Merlin's magic book. She thought it would be safe there in there. No one would try stealing from Captain Hook if they knew what was good for them. She smiled at the fact that Captain Hook was her boyfriend.

She pushed back the pillow to the top of the bed and flopped down. She cracked open the book to pick up where she left off. It was a section called Energy spells. This seemed to be Regina's favorite, she was always conjuring fire or energy when she was upset. She was still amazed by how much she would be capable of doing. She hoped that Merlin would make good on his promise to make her his apprentice. Now she just had to get him out from under Mim. Just as she was settling in with the book she felt the buzzing in her pocket.

"Swan" said Killian.

"Killian! Are you alright?"asked Emma.

"Aye. I'm here with Merlin and he wants to speak us." said Killian.

"Are you sure it's safe? I don't want to lose contact with you." said Emma.

"I assure you that we are safe my dear. She's soaking in the tub

again. She won't be disturbing us." said Merlin sharing the view with Killian.

"Ok, What's up?" asked Emma.

"I feel the water elixir is working. I'm feeling stronger and more independent of her charms as the day goes on. In fact I'm feeling more and more like a prisoner instead of a guest as I once felt." said Merlin with a sad smile creeping up his face.

"That is good news." said Emma.

"The problem is that Mim has a contract with my signature on it. In the past I've asked for information about it and she will show it to me briefly and then quickly tuck it away. The cursed me just accepted it and to be honest forgot about it almost immediately after asking each time. I first felt the pull lessen this morning while I was with her in her room. It hit me like hard and I started to see actual vibrant colors again. My life seemed less like a fog. When I asked her about the contract she pulled the scroll from her makeup table drawer. She showed me that I'd signed it at the bottom but she would not allow me to see the details once again. This time I was still conscience of its existence. I pretended to go on as I always had. I don't know if the agreement we have is bound by magic or blood. If it is and I do still owe her a debt I may not be able to freely go as I hope when these contests are over." said Merlin.

"So you want us to procure it for you?"asked Killian raising an eyebrow.

"That's exactly right my boy?" said Merlin.

Emma's eyes went wide.

"Specifically, Emma I need you to get the contract. I know he took the snow lily from me. Good work my boy by the way. I was hoping you would take the bait. I know you are planning to try to free Rumplestiltskin. I would be grateful if you could also get the contract while you are here. I need to see what I actually owe her." said Merlin.

"Is there any way you can help us free Rumplestiltskin? I'm a little nervous about waking a dragon. I've had to fight one before and it wasn't easy." said Emma.

"She has a point Mate. Can you free the Dark one of the curse?" asked Killian.

"My boy I'm sure you know what it's like to deal with the Dark one. I'm the one who imprisoned him, and on his wedding night no less. I would bet that he would be less than happy to see me if I removed the spell. I suspect that he might kill me on site. I also may still owe Mim a debt. Bonds that are created by blood or magic can have serious repercussions. If I go against it she can make my life even more of nightmare than what I woke up to today. I've already got to pretend that I'm still under her spell. That task is getting much harder as the day grows." said Merlin frowning.

"I am aware of your plight. That Dark One is not to be messed with and you are surely right. He will kill you." said Killian raising his

hook.

"So can I count on you?"asked Merlin.

"Yes, I'll just add it to my list of risky things to do at the castle while Regina and Mim are blowing up the town." said Emma sarcastically

"Good Good. I promise I'll make it up to you my dear. Now then, let me give you two some time to discuss this. I need a drink." Laughed Merlin.

Killian nodded.

Merlin walked over to the table to join Robin and the Merry Men.

"Gods Emma. Are you ok? I see things have gotten a bit rough with Regina." said Killian.

"I'm fine, we're fine. Henry went to spend some time with Regina for the rest of today. He should help her keep the Evil Queen away. I'm just happy you are ok. I was worried when you all left so quickly and I didn't hear from you." said Emma.

"The sea witch has been absent. Merlin conjured a feast and the men are quite happy for the moment. All but Robin, that is. I've been watching him." said Killian

"Oh no, it's getting worse isn't it?"asked Emma.

"Aye, he is starting to act like a blithering fool." said Killian.

"We gotta get you out of there. We have a plan set for tonight. Belle and I will be going to the castle after the contest starts. Mim should be distracted and now that we have Merlin on our side I'm sure he'll help us." said Emma.

"Just be careful Love. I'll be waiting for you to return." said Killian.

"I'll be ok. Just remember if something happens please don't agree to any games with her. No matter what the offer ok?" asked Emma.

"Aye, I won't be playing any games with that daft witch. Especially after seeing what she's done to Robin." said Killian.

"Good." she smiled.

"I must say I missed the sparks today." said Killian grinning.

"Me too." smiled Emma.

"Until tonight then Love?" asked Killian.

"See you tonight." smiled Emma.

The mirror shimmered and she was looking at herself again.



~~~~~E&K~~~~~

Regina was really happy Henry came over. She missed him. She had been fighting the darkness all day. The rage and loneliness seemed to make it worse for her to hold it back. She felt lighter as soon as Henry walked through the door. She decided that she would start baking when she got home. It always seemed to make her feel better and her mind would be occupied with the task instead of revenge or loneliness. Henry was sitting at the kitchen table eating the freshly baked cookies.

"So Mom, are you ready to fight the witch tonight?"asked Henry stuffing another cookie in his mouth.

"You keep eating those cookies and you might turn into one." said Regina giving him a big hug.

"I was worried about you." said Henry.

"Don't worry about me. I'll be fine. I'm not going to let her bully me. "said Regina.

"I was actually worried about how you are feeling now that Marian is back. I liked seeing you smile and you and Robin seemed really happy together." said Henry.

"It's sweet of you to worry but I'll be ok Henry."said Regina with a sad smile.

She didn't know if that was true or not but she hoped that was true. She couldn't expect a man like Robin to leave his newly found wife after she was missing all those years. She knew how much he loved her. The man told her that he would have walked through fire to save her. She felt like the air was let out of her at that moment.

"Mom?"said Henry trying to pull her attention back to him.

"Yes, I'm glad you're here. Why don't you show me your video game? I hear you are moving through the levels quickly." said Regina giving him another big hug.

"Ok, come on. We have time before we have to be back at Granny's. Let me show you this cool boss level that I just beat." said Henry enthusiastically.

They moved to her living room and sat together playing games until it was time to meet at Granny's.

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>Emma lost track of time while she was practicing spells and reading through the magic book. She was really embracing her magical abilities. She was having so much fun conjuring little things and practicing spells. She couldn't wait to show Killian when he was home. She popped into her parent's room and caught her father snoozing in a chair with little Neal snuggling against his chest.<p>

"What, I'm awake." said David startling.

"It's just me." whispered Emma smiling.

"Is everything alright?" whispered David.

"I've just been practicing magic. I wanted to check in with you and make sure you guys were ok." she whispered.

"Snow is taking a nap in the bedroom. Neal woke up right after she went to lie down and I didn't have the heart to wake her. He went back to sleep pretty quickly after I started rocking him. Good thing you brought this over." said David.

"I'm glad that I could help. He seems to be doing much better than what Mom described before you went missing." said Emma.

"He is. Maybe he just needed to be around his big sister more." said David.

Emma smiled.

"Listen. I need you to talk to mom when she wakes up. I'm going to need her help. You know Belle and I are going to attempt to help Rumplestiltskin while the battle is going on between Regina and Mim. I also have to try to steal Merlin's contract from Mim's room." said Emma.

"OK, is that safe?" asked David.

"Well it looks like it's the only way we can get him away from her. He can't get it himself. He's afraid that he is bonded to her. If she finds out we cured him he could be in big trouble." said Emma.

"Emma, I'll do whatever I can. This sounds dangerous. You are going to be relying on a wizard that is potentially in thrall to her. If you get hurt or are in trouble I can't help you." said David.

"If you need to contact me Hook has the other half of the mirror. If something goes wrong make sure Mom knows she has to get it before he gets pulled back. It will be the only link to me while I'm there." said Emma.

"Ok." said David.

"If worse comes to worse I need you to tell Regina about my magic. I need you to tell her what happened. She's the only person who would be able to help. I've kept this a secret so please don't do it unless you have to. Ok?" said Emma.

"Ok Honey, Just please be careful. I don't want to lose you again." said David.

Neal started to get fussy.

"I think this little guy needs to be changed." said David.

"Ok, I'll see you downstairs soon." said Emma.

She kissed her baby brother on the head and popped back to her room to continue practicing magic.

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The sun was setting in the distance. The time was fast approaching before the contest would begin. She packed Killian's satchel with things she would need for the mission and she would also need it to bring back the contract. Since she couldn't have him, the satchel would be the next best thing until he was returned to her. She was tired of this business with the witch. She couldn't wait to free Rumple and Merlin so they could end this with Mim. She was done playing games.

There was a knock at the door.

"Emma, are you ready?"asked Snow.

She opened the door to let her in.

"Yeah, I was just making sure my bag was ready." said Emma.

"Dad filled me in on the details for tonight. Please be careful." said Snow pulling her in for a big hug.

"Ok, I will." said Emma.

Her mom was squeezing her a little too tight.

"Ok, Dad, Neal, Regina and Henry are in the room. Ruby and Belle are waiting for us. I haven't seen Marian or Roland so I hope they listened and stayed home. "said Snow.

"Ok, make sure you stay safe. Stay close to Merlin ok?"said Emma.

"Ok, I will." said Snow.

"I'll go get Regina and meet you downstairs." said Snow.

"Ok." said Emma.

She pulled on her red leather jacket and then pulled the satchel across her body diagonally so that she was sure not to lose it. The snow lily and the magic dust were tucked safely inside along with her magic book.

"Let's get the show on the road." said Emma.

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Snow walked in to find David talking to their cooing baby. He was rocking him gently sitting in the rocker. Regina was sitting with Henry and he was showing her the new level of his video game.

"Regina, it's time." said Snow.

"Ok, can you help me with something in the other room?"asked Regina.

"Sure." said Snow.

Snow walked over and kissed Neal on top of his head, gave Henry a hug and she kissed David.

"We'll be back soon ok." she said.

David nodded.

She walked into the bedroom and met with Regina who was holding her heart in her hand.

"You promised to hold onto this for me. Never bring your heart to a witch fight. That is what my mother taught me." said Regina smiling.

Snow nodded trying to pretend that it wasn't creepy how many times she'd seen Regina's heart outside of her body and she picked up the wooden box from her nightstand and handed it to her.

"I promise it will be safe." said Snow.

Regina nodded.

Snow put the box into Neal's awaiting empty diaper bag. She carried the bag into the other room and placed it under Neal's crib.

Regina walked over and gave Henry a big hug and kissed his forehead.

"Thanks for your help today." said Regina.

"Good Luck Mom!"said Henry.

Regina nodded and went to meet Snow by the door.

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They all looked anxious about the contest. Ruby decided that she was going to come along to provide support for Snow so that she wouldn't be alone when she and Belle had to leave. Granny was going to stay behind to help David. She would provide another level of protection for David and the boys. Nothing was getting by Granny and her crossbow. She also wanted to be there just in case David needed to get out quickly and she needed to babysit. There was always the possibility Marian and Roland could show up too. Thank goodness for Granny.

The Dwarves were going to position themselves around the quarry to lend support too. Her mother had been busy after her nap assembling troops to support them. Everyone was on board to help even though they knew the risk. She was grateful for the extra help for her

mother and Ruby if things got out of control just in case she wasn't back in time.

Snow and Regina came through the back of the diner.

"Regina, you ready?" asked Emma.

She nodded.

"Are we taking the Emma express" smiled Belle.

Regina raised an eyebrow.

"Giving pony rides now are we?" she smiled.

"I'll meet you there ." said Regina and she poofed out of the diner.

Ruby, Belle, and Snow all joined hands with her and closed their eyes. She concentrated on the space between as she had before and pushed forward towards the quarry. Her body felt a slight pull and then stopped. When she opened her eyes they were standing next to Regina in the quarry.

"Wow, that was fun!" said Ruby.

"I know." said Belle smiling.

Snow was already walking towards Regina.

"We are all here for you." said Snow.

"I know, it means a lot." said Regina.

Belle grabbed her hand.

"You got this Regina." said Belle.

"Kick her ass Regina." said Emma.

They all laughed.

"What? She's got it coming to her." smiled Emma.

All of the sudden thunder started to boom over head. The clouds were gathering and lightning struck in the quarry. The sudden flash revealed the dwarves around the outer edges at the top of the quarry. Lightning struck again and Mim and the men appeared out of nowhere. This time she noticed they all landed softly but the men were braced for impact like the previous times.

She looked to Killian and he smiled. She felt a flutter in her stomach. She smiled back and nodded her head to Regina letting him know she would be over soon.

Merlin had hold of Mim's arm and was walking towards them. Merlin appeared to be grumbling. Mim was smiling at them with a big cocky grin on her face. She was wearing extra pink goop on her lips for the occasion. Her hair was twisted up on top of her head into what looked like a purple beehive with tendrils coming down around to frame her

pinched face and she was wearing an extremely tight hot pink dress with fur booties. She looked like a purple poodle on parade.

"So you decided to show Queenie? You're not the only one who can make an entrance." cackled Mim.

Regina rolled her eyes.

"Let's get this over with. I'd like to get home at a decent hour." said Regina.

"Does the wittle baby need to go to bed? Is it past her bedtime?"mocked Mim.

"I don't have to steal people to keep me company. My friends and I would like to get back to our lives. We don't have time for your silly games." said Regina looking around at the women surrounding her.

The women all smiled.

Thunder boomed overhead. It appeared that Regina struck a nerve.

"Fine!"shouted Mim.

Emma wanted to applaud Regina for her composure.

"This is to be a clean fight. No cheating. No fatal or possession spells are allowed." said Emma.

"Who told?"whined Mim.

At that moment Emma was glad she spent that extra time with the magic book this afternoon to notice that those types of spells could be lethal and she certainly didn't want to have to explain to Henry that his mother lost her life in a game with a sea witch.

"If you are caught cheating or breaking the rules you automatically forfeit the game. The winner takes Robin and the Merry Men as agreed." said Emma.

"Speaking of which, why aren't the men speaking again?"asked Snow.

"Mermer the pets are silenced again! You need to quit drinking. Do I need to stage an intervention with the many faces of the Mim when we return?"asked Mim.

"ooh my fault. "said Merlin stumbling towards the men.

He waved his hand and the men were able to speak again.

"Miiiiim I LOVE YOU!"shouted Robin.

"I Wuv you too Honey bunny." squeaked Mim waving and blowing kisses.

Regina whipped her head around to look at him directly with her mouth hanging open.

Belle grabbed Regina's hand.

Regina blinked her eyes closed tight.

Killian rolled his eyes and shook his head.

The Merry Men all remained looking down trying to avoid eye contact as they were all trying to stifle back from laughing at their fearless leader who was now reduced to a lovesick puppy.

"What the hell is that?"asked Emma.

"I can't help if my pets adore me." goaded Mim.

Belle and Snow were holding Regina back now.

"Let me go!"shouted Regina.

"Ooh, is Queenie ready? I'd like to get home too. Loverboy and I are going to have a gooood time tonight." said Mim blowing a kiss towards Robin.

Ruby, Snow, Belle and Emma all stepped back. Regina was going to blow and it wasn't going to be pretty.

"It's going to be a clean fight ladies. Mim go out 20 paces so we can start this contest. Remember the last woman standing at the end of the fight is declared the winner. As Emma stated you break the rules and you lose." said Merlin.

Regina nodded and an evil smirk climbed her face.

"You got it Mermer! Don't forget you owe me that special foot rub later!"called Mim as she sauntered out 20 paces shaking her butt as she walked pretending to be a fashion model.

"Regina, you got this!"shouted Snow.

"Kick her ass!" yelled Ruby.

Regina looked back and smiled.

"When I say go you start ok?"yelled Merlin.

"OK." yelled Mim.

Regina nodded.

"Swan?"called Killian.

She ran over to see him. She looked towards Merlin and he waved his hand towards Killian while Mim was primping her hair and applying more lip goo.

"Hi."said Emma.

"I can move."said Killian looking towards Merlin.

Merlin winked back.

"Are you ready Love?"asked Killian.

"Yes, I've got your satchel." she said leaning up to kiss him lightly on the lips.

"So I see. You know the penalty for stealing from Captain Hook?" he smiled.

"I'm sure you can show me later." she grinned.

"READY" shouted Merlin.

"Ok, here we go." said Emma.

Killian pulled her close holding her and putting tiny kisses on her head.

"SET" shouted Merlin.

"You have the mirror right?"asked Emma.

"Yes Love. I have it." said Killian.

"If anything happens you contact me immediately ok? Worse comes to worse get it to Snow. That's our only link back to Storybrooke." said Emma.

"Aye." he said leaning down to kiss her again.

"GO!"yelled Merlin.

A green flash of light passed over their heads. They all ducked down. The impact of the flash hit the back quarry wall causing a small avalanche of rocks behind them.

"Well this won't do." said Merlin.

He waved his hands and a clear barrier wall rose up between the women fighting and the spectators.

"There, that's better." giggled Merlin.

They watched as flashes of light danced back and forth between the women. None of them connecting as they appeared to be equally matched and were moving fast back and forth. It was like watching a magical game of tennis although they were not eager to hit the ball.

"This will all be over soon." she smiled.

"Be careful Love." said Killian.

"I will." she said.

"Belle, are you ready?"asked Emma.

"Let's go." said Belle clasping her hand firmly into Emma's.

"Belle, I need you to focus on Rumple ok? I need you to think about your love for him and imagine the sound of his heart beating. Can you



do that?"asked Emma grasping both of Belles hands so she could make a tighter connection.

Belle nodded.

Snow and Ruby were watching Regina intently.

"Good Luck, Love" said Killian.

She looked towards Killian and smiled.

Emma closed her eyes. She concentrated on the spaces between and traveling through the realms. Belle was giggling because realm travel seemed to make your stomach feel butterflies. She felt Belle pull them in a slightly different direction as they pushed towards Rumpelstiltskin's location.

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**\*\*REGINA POV\*\***

As soon as she heard the word "\*\*\*go\*\*" a green beam of light shot in her direction. She ducked to the left to avoid impact and it whirred past her in the direction of the spectators. She looked behind to see Merlin suddenly erect a glass wall in front of them. She could see Snow and Ruby nearly pressed against the glass. Both had worried looks on their faces.

She was still reeling inside from Robin's comments. She felt the energy rising within her and a ball of purple energy formed in her hand. She watched her target in the field rapidly walking back and forth with a huge grin on her face. She tossed her first ball towards Mim hoping for impact but the beast was faster than she gave her credit for and it missed hitting the wall behind her.

Another beam of energy was flying in her direction and she ducked to the right to quickly, in the process she tossed a fireball in Mim's direction in return. Mim was cackling and brewing up another ball of energy of her own readying it to toss. She watched her dodge her latest attempt and twirl around like a fool. She had to think of a strategy. The women could lob balls back and forth at each other all day. Maybe if she tired her out she could get to her. She began rapidly firing balls of energy in all directions towards the sea witch who was giggling like a fool. She clearly had the mentality of a four year old and really assumed these asinine games were fun.

"You missed na na na na na!" yelled Mim.

She didn't think toying with a man's life was funny. She felt the darkness creeping up at the thought of Mim putting her hands on Robin. She reached deep within and called forth the energy from the air around her. The air was quickly beginning to thicken with the amount of magic that was flowing. She pulled her arms back and felt the rush of heat go within and then she pushed with all her might forward throwing the energy shield directly at the giggling woman.

She let a rush of air go from her lungs as the force pushed her back. It was kind of like shooting a shotgun. The kick back was a little harsh unless you were braced for it. Mim tried to escape the cloud but was pushed hard against the quarry stone wall 30 feet behind her. She watched as Mim thumped to the ground. She smiled wide and looked back to see Snow pointing ahead.

The Witch was on her feet already and she was huffing and puffing from the impact. Mim was charging towards her with rapid speed holding a ball of energy winding it up in her arm for a throw. She pulled on the energy field once more and tossed another blast at her. Mim went down again dragging across the ground but not before she let off a blue energy ball in her direction. Mim let out a loud oomf when she thudded down. She smiled again wickedly as she caught the blue energy ball out of the air and threw it back at its creator hitting the target. Mim let out a loud cry. Regina laughed.

She felt the darkness within and she was going to embrace it. It felt good and she needed to feel good. She was tired of feeling sad and lost. Without her heart in her chest it wouldn't matter, everything was dulled. She could do what she needed and not feel bad about it. The blubbering witch pulled herself from the ground and started her attack forward again. This time she was bracing herself for impact as she watched an energy wall push towards her.

"Two can play at that game Queenie!" yelled Mim.

She crouched down and pushed hard against the ground propelling up 20 feet in the air letting the impact of Mim's cloud burst against the clear barrier that Merlin set up. She pushed her arms to her side and let herself glide down to the ground gently.

"NO FAIR! NO FAIR!"shouted Mim.

Regina smiled and raised an eyebrow.

She summoned the wall of energy again and pushed it out towards the witch who appeared to be stomping around and throwing a tantrum. She looked like a toddler with her dress hanging off one shoulder and her hair hanging in all directions.

Clouds started to roll in and she saw a few lightning blasts in the distance. The blast of energy caught Mim off guard and pushed her back once again into the rock behind her. She bounced to the floor of the quarry. Rain started falling and billowing clouds and thunder were crashing over head. She looked back to see worried faces looking at her from behind the barrier.

She waved her hands and started to collect the energy once again creating a large ball. Mim was slowly getting up so she had to work quickly. The rain was dampening the energy field which could make things difficult for her if the storm got too big.

She pushed the ball of light at Mim as she was getting back up to her feet. Upon impact the wind was knocked out of Mim forcing her to the ground once again.

The witch was pounding her fists on the ground and the earth in the quarry started to shake and break up. Rocks started falling from the walls surrounding them and cracks began to form. She looked back to

see Ruby and Snow clinging to each other for balance as she tumbled to the ground as the last tremor hit.

"Mim I loooove you!" shouted Robin.

She winced and turned around picking herself up from the ground.

A ball of energy came her way and knocked her flat against the barrier. The bitch hit her! Damn it the bitch hit her.

She looked out in the quarry and saw Mim dancing about like a peacock. She brushed off her sleeves and pushed her arms out to the sides pulling them forward as she collected the energy once more and balled it together turning it into fire. She pushed with such force that it knocked her back against the barrier. Mim was twirling around like an idiot and didn't see it coming. The impact of the energy pushed her back so hard that she flip flopped against the rock wall and landed with a thud. A loud sobbing could be heard from a distance.

The air around them started getting thicker. Heavy rain started falling and wind started whipping around in the quarry. This storm came out of nowhere.

"Damn Sea Creatures! Its time to Filet this bitch!"she yelled.

"Nooo, not my Mim!" yelled Robin.

She looked back to see Merlin silence Robin with a wave of his hand.

She was soaking wet now. She summoned all the energy she had and created the energy wall once again. She felt the dark energy prickly against her skin and she sucked in a breath deepening the connection to the energy. She thought of all of her pain and the darkness was creeping over the energy. She smiled and pushed the energy wall as hard as she could towards Mim.

The storm was raging so hard that Mim didn't know what hit her. She was pushed so hard against the wall that she fell and began twitching on the ground after the impact. Regina disappeared in a cloud of purple smoke and then appeared in front of Mim's body. The storm started to break and the clouds began to clear. She knelt down next to Mim. She was still breathing but clearly was knocked out by the last impact.

She waved towards Merlin. He immediately popped forward and stood next to her.

"She appears to be out cold." said Regina.

Merlin smiled and took Regina's hand raised her arm high in the air.

"WINNER!" he yelled.

Mim was starting to come to.

"What do we do?"asked Regina.

Merlin waved his hand and a fish bowl appeared half full of water.

Regina waved her hand over Mim's body and changed her into a fish. She quickly picked her up and put her into the bowl.

"That should hold her." giggled Merlin.

"It better or the next time I see her she will be sushi." said Regina.

The little fish began swimming rapidly around in the bowl looking for escape. Merlin placed the lid on top of the bowl and magically sealed it leaving just a bit of space for air to get in.

"Excellent fight Regina." said Merlin.

"That means the men can go free right?"asked Regina.

"Yes, all but the pirate." said Merlin with a worried look on his face.

"But, she's a fish. Why would you keep him?"asked Regina.

"Those were the rules." said Merlin.

They reached the barrier and Merlin waved his hands removing it from existence. He waved his hands to free the Merry Men and Robin. They were no longer frozen in place and Robin could speak.

"You can take your prizes home my Queen." said Merlin bowing.

Snow and Ruby came up and practically tackled her.

"Regina that was amazing!"said Ruby.

"Are you alright?"asked Snow.

"I'm fine but the wizard says that \_Hook \_can't go with us. Where is Ms. Swan? Where is Belle?"asked Regina looking around.

Robin was on his knees at Merlin's feet begging him to change Mim back into a woman. He had tears in his eyes.

"What about him? He's a mess." said Regina.

Snow looked worried.

"\_Hook\_? What's going on?"asked Regina.

He looked worried.

Merlin gave Hook a sideways glance.

"Come on my boy, back you go. Rules are Rules." said Merlin.

Killian nodded and walked over to Snow bumping her as he walked past her.

Snow nodded.

Merlin, Hook, and Mim in the fishbowl disappeared.

Robin was on his knees and moaning.

"Oh Mim, I'm so sorry I couldn't help you." he cried.

Regina rolled her eyes and waved her hand over Robin knocking him out.

"You there Merry Men, take him somewhere. Don't take him home. His child shouldn't see him like this." said Regina.

"Take him to Gold's shop. There's a cot in the back." said Snow.

Little John bent down and picked him up and tossed him over his shoulder. The dwarves came running down the hill towards them.

"That was some fight Sister." said Grumpy.

Regina smiled.

"Can you drive them to Gold's?" asked Snow.

"Sure, Princess the truck's just up the hill. Come on boys you're free let's go celebrate!" said Grumpy.

"Will someone please tell me what is going on?" asked Regina.

Snow looked at her and frowned.

## 21. How to Train your Dragon?

### Ch. 21

They popped into the castle and landed roughly sliding across the marble floor. Emma tried to control the movement but Belle's feelings were erratic as they got closer to the destination and it made it harder for her to pinpoint the right location and they flubbed the landing. She was laying face down on the marble. The satchel was lying on the floor about a foot away with items scattered around. She picked it up and shifted the contents back inside. Belle was groaning as she picked herself up from the floor and dusted off.

"You ok?" asked Emma.

"Yes, I'm ok. Just a little banged up. You might need to work on your landings." said Belle smiling.

"We made it." said Emma smiling.

She looked around the room. It was as grand as the room the men were held captive in but there were windows from floor to ceiling. A large wooden arched door and a huge stained glass window decorated the entry way. The colors probably looked amazing when the light was shining through it. There was no sign of Rumpel in the entry area so they began looking around to see if they could find him. They

carefully stepped through the castle just in case there were any wards or protection spells lingering. Emma seemed to have a sense about that now. Ever since she started embracing her magic she could almost feel a hum if she was coming close to it. It was similar to when she felt Mim spying on her through the mirror. It was a weird feeling.

"You see him?" asked Emma.

"Wait, what's that over there? Is that a tail?" asked Belle pointing towards the hall on the right.

"Come on let's go." said Emma.

As they approached they noticed that what they saw was really only the tip of his tail. Rumpel the dragon had light green scales with yellow iridescent accents. He had pointed yellow bumps down his spine that degraded in size as it got towards the tip. At the tip there were yellow spikes that looked extremely sharp. His face looked peaceful as he slept even though he was quite ferocious looking. He had long spiky teeth sticking out from his bottom lip. One of the teeth was golden in color.

"Oh boy, he's a big one and a little scary." said Emma.

"Yes but he's all mine. He does make a rather cute dragon doesn't he?" said Belle smiling.

"Let's get the contract first and then we'll wake him ok." smiled Emma.

"Alright. Is it ok if I stay here with my husband?" asked Belle.

"That's probably a good idea. Keep a look out and if anyone comes hide behind him." said Emma.

"OK, be careful." said Belle.

Emma looked down the corridor and noticed the door on the left was slightly ajar. A pink glow was coming from the room.

"That could be Mim's room. I'm going to check it out." said Emma pointing towards the door.

Belle nodded as she stood petting Rumpel on the head. She had tears forming in the corner of her eyes.

"You know we've gotten through many things but this sure is a first." said Belle smiling.

She had a few tears sliding down her face.

"We've got this. It's going to be alright. With any luck you are going home tonight. Don't worry ok?" said Emma.

"Yeah, sure. It's just this was supposed to be my honeymoon. I never expected it to be like this." said Belle.

Emma walked over and hugged her.

"You know, you've been strong for everyone else this week while all this craziness has been going on. You even helped Regina of all people. You're entitled to be a little emotional." said Emma.

"Thanks, you know Regina's not so bad when you get to know her. I'm working on forgiveness. I'm not sure Rumple will be ok with me inviting her over to the house anytime soon but its getting better between us. Now go so we can wake up my husband." said Belle smiling.

Belle sat next to Dragon Rumple and patted him on his sleeping head. They were truly Beauty and the Beast. His green scaly skin reminded her of seeing him in the Enchanted Forrest. She had no idea what he looked like in true form and he surely surprised her that day. She understood why everyone feared him when she saw what he really looked like. He seemed more pleasant in dragon form than in his full Rumplestiltskin form.

Emma walked down the hall and crept into the room keeping her back to the wall as close as she could get. She quickly surveyed the room to make sure there wasn't any immediate danger. The room appeared to be empty and she didn't have any weird feelings so it seemed there were no magical wards. She rubbed her nose. There was a sickeningly sweet stench that smelled like Mim lingering in the air. She picked up the atomizer that was sitting at the edge of the tub and squeezed it. She coughed at the extreme scent that filled the air around her. This had to be the right place.

There was a huge claw foot white porcelain bathtub in the center of the room. Merlin mentioned that Mim spent most of her time in a tub. She noticed a few shiny objects towards the drain. She bent down to pick one up. She quickly realized they were scales. Her eyes went wide. Mim really is a sea creature. She put the scales into her jacket pocket and continued looking. She knew she had to hurry because she wasn't sure how long Regina and Mim would be fighting. She just hoped Storybrooke was still standing when she returned.

She saw a little pink ornate dresser in the corner with a mirror on the top. That had to be the vanity table that Merlin was talking about. It had a series of drawers down the side and one in the center. She pulled each drawer open to search for the contract.

The middle drawer was full of tubes of that pink goop that she seemed to cake on her lips. She quickly closed it. The top center drawer was also full of the pink goop and more of that stinky perfume. The next drawer had a strange odor coming from it. She jumped back when she pulled it open. It was full of dead frogs. She quickly shut it. She pulled out the bottom drawer and there was the scroll.

She unrolled it and looked to make sure she had what she needed. She noticed Merlin's signature on the bottom but at the top it said deed to the castle. It wasn't a debt contract at all. She smiled raising an eyebrow at the thought. She tucked the scroll into the satchel. She searched the other drawers to be sure there were no other papers just in case she didn't have the right document.

She also felt underneath the table and around the back looking for hidden drawers. In her previous line of work she often found the

undesirables had a hidden stash usually in an obvious place. She felt under the chair and there was something odd. She gave it a push and the cushion popped. Underneath the cushion there was another piece of paper peeking out. She carefully pulled it out and examined it. Her eyes went wide. This was it. She had been showing him a dupe all along. According to this document it was actually Mim who owed Merlin the debt. She lost in a magical duel with him. It was her name signed across the bottom in what appeared to be blood. There were no details about their duel so she wasn't sure how Mim was able to give him the venom but the poor man had been her slave for long enough. She tricked him into thinking he owed her but it was actually the other way around.

She carefully rolled that document and put it into the satchel with the deed that she already found in the drawers. She carefully closed all of the drawers to make sure nothing looked out of place. She also pushed the cushion on the chair back into its original position.

She worked her way out of the room and went back down to find Belle.

"Did you get it?"asked Belle.

"Yes, I got it. Not only is he not in debt to her but she is technically in debt to him. I also found out that this is Merlin's castle. I found the deed. She'd been showing him the deed with his name on it all along that way he wouldn't challenge that it was his signature" said Emma smiling.

"That evil witch has been keeping him prisoner in his own home. I hope Regina kicks her arse." said Belle.

"You ready to wake up your husband?" asked Emma smiling.

"Let's do this." said Belle jumping to her feet.

She pulled the Snow Lily from the satchel and handed it to Belle and reached deep into the bag looking for the dust.

"Wait, where is the dust?"said Emma but it was too late.

Belle already waved the flower and back and forth in front of his nose. He snorted and then his eyes popped open quickly. He was on his feet and licking his lips.

"Quick, you have to dust him." said Belle.

"It's missing!"said Emma.

She grabbed Belle's hand and pulled her down the hall before the dragon could take notice but they accidentally knocked a silver platter to the floor as they ran and it crashed to the floor. The dragon's attention was immediately directed towards them and he came running. They ducked behind the wall at the end of the corridor.

A beam of fire flashed passed them.

"My guess is that he doesn't know who we are." said Emma wincing.



"What happened to the dust?"asked Belle.

"I don't know, I must have dropped it when we landed. I need to get in there and look for it." whispered Emma.

The stood silently as they heard footsteps approaching. The dragon walked past them looking around the room. His big yellow eyes appeared to be glowing. They crouched down low trying to keep their visibility to a minimum.

"We're going to need a distraction so I can get in there and look around." said Emma.

"How about that silver platter that we dropped? Maybe we can use that to distract him again?"said Belle.

"That's a good idea." said Emma.

She saw it lying on the floor down the hall where they came from. She closed her eyes and thought of the plate. It popped into her hands.

"That was amazing." said Belle.

"I'm going to pop over there to where we fell when we came in. If something happens I need you to bang this really loud to distract him." said Emma.

"Ok, I've got your back." said Belle.

Dragon Rumples was looking around menacingly very slowly. His breathing was heavy and rough. His snout was in the air and he was sniffing. She closed her eyes and thought of the entry room door and the beautiful stained glass window. She popped out into the open room only inches from his tail. She quickly scampered behind the pillar so she could get a better look around the floor for the missing dust.

The dragon turned around looking towards her pillar. She stood as silent as she possibly good. She noticed Belle crouched down by the wall where they were and bobbed her head letting her know she was ok. The dragon moved again farther away from her towards the corner. It was sniffing around and quickly popped its head forward reaching for something. When it pulled back its head it had a frog in its mouth and he was gulping it down. She shook her head. That was disgusting. He went back to looking in that area. She took her chance and bent down to the floor and started searching around for the vial. She finally spotted it near the door where they came in. It was slightly hidden in a little crack at the surface of the marble. She looked to Belle and mouthed the word vial and pointed to it.

Belle nodded.

She got down on the floor on all fours and crawled towards the vial as softly as she could. She reached the door and picked it up tucking it into her pocket. What she didn't realize was that the dragon snuck up behind her and was looking at her with his big yellow eyes and had a big toothy grin on his face. She felt his breath blowing at her back.

Her eyes went wide and she quickly stood and backed herself up to the door. She was in shock.

BANG! Belle tossed the large plate and the dragon quickly turned around slamming his big spiny tail into her leg causing her to go down. She tried to stifle her cry of pain and slowly began inching across the floor towards Belle. He turned around again looking for her and she stayed very still so that he couldn't see her. Belle began crawling out to try to help her in slow movements. She had a gash in her leg from where his tail hit that was bleeding. Emma concentrated on the plate once more and it came to her hands.

When Belle got to her she tossed the silver plate again and Belle helped her to her feet and she pulled her towards the corridor where they came from. The dragon caught their movement that time and bounded towards them. Since Emma was hurt they weren't quick enough and the dragon rushed at them pushing them both down.

He screamed really loud and shot a breath of fire towards them. Emma grabbed Belle's hand and tried to pull her but the dragon was too quick for them to react and he knocked them both back slamming them against the side wall. Her head snapped back hard on impact. The room started to spin and it went black. The last thing she heard was Belle calling her name.

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\_\*\*Belle's POV\*\*\_

Emma was passed out cold and the dragon came towards them again. She held her breath and lay silent on the ground hoping Rumpel would be distracted. He sniffed close to them but was distracted when a frog hopped out from the area in the corner where it had its original feast.

Belle noticed that Emma's leg was bleeding. She needed to figure out how to get her out of that room without the dragon seeing them. She slowly got behind Emma and grabbed her around her torso. There was a door 6 feet to the right of them along the wall. She started to inch them slowly towards it hoping that it was unlocked. If she could just get them inside she could try to call for help.

Rumpel found another frog and was happily distracted. She took the chance and dragged Emma to the door. She waited silently until Rumpel was distracted again by another frog and she pulled on the door handle. Thankfully it was unlocked. She opened it to find it was a coat closet. She pulled Emma inside and closed the door behind them. She let out a sigh of relief. Thank goodness for the frogs wherever they came from.

They were sitting in the dark with only the light coming in from under the door. She started patting Emma on her cheeks to try to revive her.

"Emma, Emma Can you hear me?"whispered Belle into her ear.

"Emma, Emma Please wake up." said Belle.

Belle heard the snarling breath under the closet door. She could feel tears sliding down her cheeks.

"Emma, please wake up." whimpered Belle.

She felt a rush of hot air blowing underneath the door as Rumpel waited outside. She started patting on Emma's cheeks once again trying to revive her. She finally started to come too.

"Wait, why's it so dark?"whispered Emma.

"Oh, Thank God. We're in a closet. You were unconscious." said Belle.

The hot breath puffed in the little room again. Emma tried to sit up.

"Ow, my head." said Emma.

"We need to get out of here. Did you get the dust?"asked Belle.

"Yes, I've got it in my pocket. Maybe I can pop us into the other room so we can regroup. Can you help me up a bit?" said Emma.

She heard thundering footsteps coming towards them and then a crash against the closet door.

"Hurry!" said Belle.

"Hold my hands ok." said Emma.

Emma closed her eyes and thought of the room where the men were being held and they popped out.

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Belle and Emma landed in the room with a thud. She saw black again.

At that moment Merlin and Killian appeared in the room. Merlin was holding a little fishbowl in his hand.

"Swan!" said Killian rushing down to meet them.

"She's been hurt pretty badly. She was just awake but I think the fall caused her to pass out again." said Belle.

Killian bent down and scooped her up from the floor moving her to the couch and gently placed her down. He brushed the hair back from her face and kissed her forehead.

"Always have to be the hero." he said with a smirk.

"Her leg is bleeding. She was hit by Rumpel's tail." said Belle.

"I'll take care of it. Do you have some bandages?"asked

Killian.

Merlin waved his hand in the air. Her leg was bandaged up neatly and a blanket appeared at her feet.

"Thanks, Mate." said Killian as he pulled the blanket up over her.

"He's a feisty one isn't he." giggled Merlin.

"Yes, he is. There is something else you should know." said Belle.

Belle went into Emma's bag and pulled out the scrolls.

"Emma said that Mim tricked you." Said Belle.

Merlin looked at her with a concerned glance.

She unrolled the deed.

"This must be what she was showing you.", said Belle.

"Yes, yes, that's my name. I recall seeing that today. Oh Yes! This is the deed to the castle. This is my place! I remember now." giggled Merlin.

Belle reached in and pulled out the other rolled document.

"This is the contract. It appears that it's actually Mim that owes you and not the other way around." said Belle showing him the document.

When she handed it to him a magical wave passed over his body and pushed him back with a force.

"Whoa, that was a doozy!" said Merlin.

"Are you alright?" asked Belle.

"I remember everything! This parchment must have had a remember all spell attached. I knew she was up to no good." said Merlin.

He picked up the little fish bowl.

"You're going to be swimming in there for a long while old girl!" he shouted.

Belle laughed.

"Can you tell me what happened dear? Why didn't you turn him back?" asked Merlin.

"Yes, how'd this happen?" asked Killian.

"We dropped the dust when we crash landed at the castle. We didn't know it that it was missing. When we were ready to revive him, Emma handed me the flower and I was so eager to wake him that I didn't realize she didn't have the dust until it was too late." said Belle.

"I see. Did you try kissing him?"asked Merlin smiling.

"Well, no everything happened so fast that I didn't even think about it. You know he was trying to attack us, and my first thought wasn't to kiss him . We were just trying to get away from him. Emma got hurt when she tried to retrieve the dust. She has it in her pocket." said Belle.

Killian pulled back the blanket and pulled the vial of dust from her pocket.

"Here you go Mate!"said Killian tossing it over to his waiting hands.

"How about you and I go transform your husband back to his old cantankerous self?"said Merlin smiling putting his arm around her shoulders.

"Ok, I'm ready." said Belle.

"My boy, you'll take care of our dear girl won't you?"said Merlin.

"Aye. I've got her." said Killian.

Merlin and Belle popped out of the room.

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Killian sat down next to Emma on the couch and gently caressed her cheek. She looked so peaceful sleeping there. He smiled. Thank goodness Regina won. If they would have come back here and Mim won the battle they would have had serious trouble on their hands.

"Always the hero, aren't you Love?"said Killian.

He picked up and held her hand giving her a small kiss on her cheek.

"Killian." she moaned.

"Yes, Love you're safe. Everything will be ok." said Killian.

She slowly opened her beautiful green eyes and looked up to him.

"Thank goodness you're here." she said.

She tried to sit up and immediately fell back grabbing her head and moaning.

"Love, stay put. You're hurt." said Killian.

"So stupid. Wait, Where's Belle?" she asked.

"It's ok Love. She's with Merlin. They are going to change Rumple

back into himself. I would prefer not to be present when the Dark One is angry if I can help it." said Killian smiling.

She smiled back.

"So Regina won?"asked Emma.

"Yes, she won. Mim is now an actual fish. She is swimming in that little bowl over there as we speak." said Killian.

"Thank goodness. What about Robin." asked Emma.

"Don't know. Merlin popped us out immediately when you hadn't returned. He was just as worried as I was." said Killian.

"Thank you for taking care of me." said Emma.

"Speaking of taking care of you, we should alert your Mum that you are alright." said Killian.

Emma pulled the mirror from her pocket and handed it to him.

Killian tapped the mirror.

"Emma is that you?"asked Snow.

"Mom, I'm here." said Emma.

"Thank Goodness you're alright. We were so worried. Dad and I are headed over to Gold's shop. We are taking Robin there. Regina is in her own car but we convinced her to come celebrate with us later." said Snow.

"I'm ok, just went a few rounds with a dragon. Killian's taking care of me. " said Emma.

"Merlin and Belle are going to take care of Rumplestiltskin." said Killian.

"Thank god you're alright. I'll think of something to tell Regina. Killian take care of our girl." said Snow smiling.

"Aye, will do." said Killian.

Snow's reflection shimmered away and he was looking back at himself.

"Thank you." Smiled Emma.

"Of Course Love. Just rest and I'll tell you all about the fight. You can tell me later what it was like to fight yet another dragon." said Killian smiling.

"OK." she said snuggling closer to his side.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

Belle and Merlin popped into the entry way to look for Rumpel. He

appeared to be wandering around looking for more frogs.

"OK my dear, as I'm sure you noticed if you are not moving he can't see you. It's a safety precaution I put into my spells should such a situation arise." said Merlin.

"OK, what do we do?" asked Belle.

"You still have the Snow Lily?"asked Merlin.

"Yes, I've got it right here." said Belle.

"Good Good." said Merlin.

He waved his hand in the air and the dragon fell down to the ground sleeping once again.

"Rumple! Is he alright?"asked Belle.

"He's sleeping my dear. No harm done. How about I get you two home?"said Merlin.

Belle nodded.

They walked over to where Rumple was sleeping and Belle held Merlin's hand and closed her eyes.

When she opened her eyes they were standing back in the shop. Rumple was sleeping on the floor in front of the door. They heard a jingling of the bell above the door. Grumpy came walking in from outside and saw Rumple the dragon sleeping.

"DRAGON!" he yelled and ran from the shop.

Belle laughed.

"Are you ready my dear?"asked Merlin.

"Yes! I'm ready." Belle.

"OK get a good grip on his head there and pucker up. I'll take care of the flower this time." said Merlin.

"What about the dust?"asked Belle.

"Why waste good dust when you have True Love's Kiss?"said Merlin winking at her.

Belle smiled and Grabbed Rumple around the neck.

Merlin began waiving the snow lily under Rumple's nose. He started coming to again. His eyes opened.

"Now!"yelled Merlin.

Belle pressed her lips to the top of his head. A flare of light beamed and air blew all around them. Rumple was transformed from dragon back to man in an instant. He was kneeling down on the ground with his back towards them.

"That's my queue to leave!" said Merlin and he popped out of the shop.

"Rumple!" shouted Belle.

She hugged him around the neck and stifled him from speaking with a long deep kiss.

"I've missed you." she said snuggling close to his chest.

"I feel rather rested. How'd we get back at the shop? What's happened?" asked Rumple.

Belle reached up and captured his lips again and he responded by pulling her in tight to him and deepening the kiss. Things started to get heated so she pulled back so that they could get somewhere a little more private.

"I'll tell you all about it later. Can we go back to our honeymoon now?" asked Belle batting her eyes.

He looked at her adoring face and smiled. He grabbed hold of her tightly and they popped out of the shop.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

Regina, Snow, David and Grumpy all came rushing into Gold's shop. David had his sword in his hand, Snow had her bow and arrows at the ready, Grumpy had his pick ax and Regina had a fireball ready to go just in case there was immediate danger.

"I'm telling you, there was a dragon right here!" said Grumpy pointing to the floor in front of the door.

David carefully looked around the shop but there wasn't any sign of a dragon.

"Well it appears to have left. Maybe you should consider holding back on the drinks a bit?" said David slapping Grumpy on the back.

"Boys, it's safe to bring him in now. It was a false alarm." called Snow.

Little John picked Robin up out of the back of the truck and carried him into the shop placing him on the cot.

"Regina, you're going to have to wake him up." said Snow.

Regina rolled her eyes and let out a breath. She waved her hand over him and he came too.

"Mim! Where are you?" he called reaching out his arm.

"Boss, you're here back in Storybrooke." said Little John.

Robin stared at him with a blank expression and then his eyes searched around the room and then he fell back on the cot. He looked listless and his eyes were glazed over.



"Robin, Is that you?"yelled Marian as she came rushing into the shop with Roland in tow.

David sheathed his sword and moved to the side so she could get past him.

Regina closed her eyes and Snow moved over to stand by her grabbing her hand.

"What's happened?"asked Marian.

Marian bent down to her knees beside the cot. He didn't react to her presence at all.

Roland went over and tugged on Regina's jacket. She looked down and he grabbed her other hand and was standing close to her shaking. She bent down to his level and picked him up snuggling him close to her. She closed her eyes and held him giving him a little kiss on his head.

"Marian, Robin's been poisoned by Mim." said Snow.

"What? How? Is he going to be alright?"she said frantically.

"We know of two cures. One is True Love's kiss and the other is to drink water from the Never Sea."said Snow.

Marian bent down over Robin and pressed her lips to his but nothing happened. She did it over and over and he still lie there with a blank expression.

"Nothing's happening." said Marian.

Tears started flowing down her cheeks.

Roland whispered to Regina and he climbed down from her arms.

"Mama, are you ok?"asked Roland.

"Yes, Baby. Papa's just sleepy." said Marian.

"His eyes are open?"asked Roland.

He bent over and hugged Robin and kissed him on the cheek.

"I missed you Papa." said Roland.

A flash of light swirled around Robin and a pulse of air blew all of their hair back.

Robin's eyes started to focus and he sat up.

"Roland!"he said grabbing his son and pulling him up onto the cot with him and snuggling him tight.

Snow squeezed Regina's hand.

"Robin, thank gods your ok!"said Marian.

She reached over and hugged both her son and Robin together.

The crowd of Merry Men cheered.

"Time for a celebration! Who's coming with me?" yelled Grumpy.

All of the men filed out of Gold's shop following Grumpy. Snow and David stood silently by Regina.

"Marian, take Roland home and I'll be there soon ok?" said Robin.

She nodded and picked up Roland and held him tight as she walked towards the door.

"Thank you Queen. I appreciate your help saving my husband." said Marian bowing towards her.

Regina smiled and waved to her.

"Bye Regina!" called Roland.

"Goodbye Roland." she said softly.

Robin was looking at Regina with a sadness in his eyes.

"Regina, Snow and I are going to head over to Granny's to celebrate. Are you coming?"

"No, I don't think so but I'll walk out with you." said Regina.

"If you need us you know where to find us ok? Don't worry about Henry. He can stay with us tonight." said David.

"OK, Wait, Where are Belle and Emma?" said Regina.

"They're at Granny's. Right after you hit Mim with the final blast they went back to let Henry know you were ok and check to make sure that quake didn't cause any damage. She called me right before we got here." Said David.

Snow smiled.

Regina raised an eyebrow and she started to walk out with them.

"Wait, Regina can I talk to you for a moment?" asked Robin.

She closed her eyes and stopped in her tracks.

Snow and David left the shop leaving her alone with Robin.

"What is it?" asked Regina.

He was standing behind her. She couldn't face him. She felt too ashamed.

"Are you alright?" asked Robin.

"I'm fine." said Regina and she started walking towards the door.

He pulled her back by her arm forcing her to turn and look at

him.

"You're not." said Robin.

"What do you want me to say? I'm hurting alright. No I'm not fine. I know there isn't anything I can do about this but I miss you." said Regina with a crack in her voice.

He pulled her in his arms and crushed his lips down on hers. She immediately responded kissing him back with everything she had inside of her. Tears were sliding down her cheeks and she suddenly couldn't breathe. He pulled her close holding her as she sobbed into his shoulder. He rubbed his hand up and down her back trying to sooth her pain away.

"I'm sorry Regina. I never meant to hurt you." said Robin.

She pulled back wiping her eyes with the back of her hand.

"I know. It's not your fault. I didn't know. I just want you to know that. I didn't know it was me that took her from you. I didn't mean to cause you all those years of pain." said Regina.

"Shhh." he said pulling her close and embracing her as tight as he could.

She let herself feel his warmth and comfort. She let her body mould to his. She wanted to savor what could be the last time she held him. She squeezed her eyes tight and just let herself feel loved. Even without her heart this felt good.

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Merlin popped back into the room to find Killian peacefully asleep next to Emma on the couch. He walked over and pulled the blanket up and tucked them in. Killian snuggled closer to Emma holding her head up against his chest.

He walked over and picked up the little fish bowl that housed the \_Marvelous Magnificent Mad Madam Mim. \_"There you are my little fishy wishy. I know just the place for you." giggled Merlin.

He waved his hands about and corrected the room to its original look. The door was back where it belonged. The windows were now in their proper place, in the center of the walls. He walked over to look out. He couldn't remember when it looked more beautiful. Even with no moon that night the stars were shining brightly enough for him to see the tranquility of his land.

"Merlin." Emma whispered.

"Yes, my dear. Are you alright?"he asked.

"Is the contest over? Can we go home now?"asked Emma.

"My dear I think it would be best if you stayed here with me for a few days. You hit your head pretty hard. Not the best for realm to realm travel I'm afraid." said Merlin.

"So you know, this is your castle right?"asked Emma.

"Yes, and I can't thank you enough for your help. You will make a truly great apprentice." said Merlin.

"So it's true then? You want to teach me magic?"asked Emma smiling.

"Yes, my dear. As your beau would say \_You're a Marvel\_" giggled Merlin.

"That she is." said Killian.

"I'm sorry, I didn't want to wake you." said Emma.

"Its ok Love." he said giving her a squeeze.

"Is that her?"asked Emma.

"Yes, this is Mim and this she will remain in here until the debt she owes me is paid or until I feel like letting her go." giggled Merlin.

She swore she heard the fish whine when he said that. She just chalked it up to her head injury.

"Now, then since you both are awake how about I give you a proper room to rest in?"asked Merlin.

Emma nodded and they flashed from the room and appeared in a bedroom in the castle. It looked really familiar to her in some way. It was on the larger side. There was a huge bed covered in a fluffy ornately decorated bedspread with tons of pillows in the middle. The wall to the right were aligned with bookshelves and stacked with books. There was a bathroom connected to the room and a desk on the left side wall. On the back wall facing them were floor to ceiling windows that overlooked the Enchanted Forest.

"Wow, this is really nice." said Emma looking around.

Killian scooped her up and placed her onto the bed.

"There you go Love" said Killian.

Merlin walked to the windows.

"It's been a long time since I've had anyone in my home. I don't want you to think of yourself as company. This is your room. If I've gotten it correct. This is what you dreamt of as a little girl?" said Merlin.

Emma's eyes went wide. That was why it looked so familiar.

"Yes, how did you know?"asked Emma.

"Ah, one of the many things I plan to teach you. I expect you'll be visiting often and I want you to have a home here. As you know the castle is cloaked so no one will find us here." said Merlin.

"It's perfect." said Emma looking at Killian and smiling.

She yawned and snuggled into the many pillows.

"What do you say my boy? You like it? I suspect you'll be here as well so consider this your home too." said Merlin.

"It's wonderful Mate." said Killian looking down.

"What's wrong?"asked Merlin.

Killian brushed her Emma's hair out of her face and pulled the blanket up from the bottom of the bed to cover her.

"Thank you for offering to teach her." said Killian smiling.

"My boy I know all of this magic scares you but you have to know that your soul has been waiting for her for a long time. You can't tell me that it doesn't feel right to be near her and that when she is gone you feel a little empty." he said.

Kilian raised his eyebrow and nodded.

"It's the same for her. You're lucky. She needs you too. She could never fulfill her potential without you in her life. So stop worrying and prepare yourself for an amazing journey. We have much to learn and much to do." said Merlin slapping him on the back.

"Thanks Mate." said Killian.

Merlin waved his hand in the air and two goblets popped into his hands.

"Here you go my boy. I thought you could use a drink. I know I could. Cheers!" he giggled.

"Cheers Mate!"said Killian taking a long gulp.

Merlin picked up the fishbowl and walked to the door.

"Get some rest my boy. You're safe now." said Merlin.

Killian nodded. He put the goblet down on the bedside table and climbed into bed with Emma.

She snuggled back into him as soon as he lay next to her. He draped his arm over her and kissed her on top of her head snuggling in close.

She rolled over in his arms facing him. She looked into his eyes and leaned in to give him a light kiss on his lips.

"I couldn't have gotten through this without you. Merlin was right you know, about that empty feeling. When you aren't with me I feel it. I miss you and my body misses you. Maybe it's my soul that misses you like he said but as far as I'm concerned you're it for me. "she said.

He pressed his lips to hers gently holding them there letting himself take in what she just said. He pulled back and looked at her. Tears

were welling in his eyes and his heart felt lighter than he ever remembered it feeling in his long lifetime.

"You've no idea what that means to me to hear you say that Love. I was afraid that once you embraced all of this I would seem small to you. You wouldn't need me any longer. You know how I feel about you Love. I'd do anything to be with you. It's nice to know you feel the same about me." said Killian.

Now she had tears in her eyes and a splitting headache from earlier. She smiled at him.

"Killian Jones, Captain Hook, you're my best friend. You're in this for the long haul right?" she smiled.

"Aye Love, that I am. The wizard's right. We're going to have some fun." He chuckled.

"Good, now get over here and snuggle with me because my head is killing me and I need to get some rest." she said.

"As you wish." said Killian.

## 22. A New Found Calm

### Ch. 22

Merlin spent the night going through the castle and correcting the changes that Mim made during her stint of re-decorating. He often cringed as each memory of the demeaning tasks she had him doing for her entered his mind. He'd been so arrogant and felt humbled that a witch like Mim could take advantage of him for such a long time. He wouldn't allow her to do that to another soul again magical or not. He had her tucked safely away in her fishbowl cell in his office under heavy magical wards. No entity would get within five feet of that bowl without forgetting their destination in the first place and being magically transported back to the center hall of the castle. She wouldn't be going anywhere as long as he had a say in it. Another horrible thought crept into his mind.

"How dare she have me, Merlin, file her toenails!" he yelled, echoing off of the walls of the castle.

The walls rumbled. He took a deep breath. He could feel his blood boiling but he forced composure. He spent enough time under that woman's spell and would not let her have the satisfaction of taking one more moment of his time. He also had reason to celebrate. He had a new apprentice for the first time in hundreds of years and she was special. She was certainly rough around the edges but she seemed to learn quickly. If only he had her as a child. She would be quite the force to reckon with by now.

She does have a baby brother. Where there is one there could be another and possibly a second chance. He rubbed his beard. Only time will tell if the little prince charming comes into some magical powers. He giggled.

The thought of working with a child again would be fabulous. Their imaginations run wild and they elicit the greatest magical creations.

He would certainly keep an eye on him and his big sister would be a wonderful teacher if he can bring her along as he hoped.

He waved his hand and doused the lights that climbed the circular staircase that lead to his tower. It was his favorite place in the castle. It was the home to all his wonderful magical objects. He was a collector, some might say a hoarder, but he'd been alive for a long time and had come across some delectable objects in his time in the realms.

Each realm had beautiful treasures and special things all their own. One of the things he missed most while under Mim's servitude was the ability to travel the realms. She had him acting as her personal valet and taking her to the realms of her choice so that she could challenge the creatures that lived there. It was never his choice where they went but that would change. He smiled wide.

Emma never traveled the realms before and he would be happy to have company. She and her captain would be wonderful companions. He suspected that her son Henry would accompany them at times as well but he would have to talk to her about that.

She needed to heal first. He would teach her a healing spell in the morning but it's better for her to remember not to tangle with a dragon unarmed. That was not a smart decision on her part and a night of pain will help her remember. That would likely not be the only dragon or beast she would tangle with on their adventures. She seemed to have a knack for rushing into terrible situations.

He hoped them here at the castle for a few days but he would have to talk to her about that because she would likely want to get back to Henry as soon as possible. He'd never been to Storybrooke before Mim asked him to scope out the talent in the town. It looked like an interesting realm with much to offer. He would have to make up with Rumplestiltskin first. He cringed at that thought. Perhaps he would send a note before showing his face in the town. The Dark One was not one to be toyed with and he also suspected that his honeymoon was back on so he had a little time before he would have to eat that crow.

When he finally reached the top level he waved his hand mumbling the secret word to open it and walked inside. Things appeared to be as he left them. It was rather dusty in the room. He still didn't know how long he was under Mim's spell but he suspected it was at least 100 years if not longer.

He did remember possibly entering the room on a few occasions looking for magical items that Mim needed for some of her challenges. He would have to take an inventory of his favorite items to make sure that none were missing. He found his trusty cot in the back of the room and waved his hand over it. The dust was lifted and swept into a jar. He giggled. He could often think of reasons where a little dust was required for a spell here or a potion there. He would have fun teaching Emma how to use things she might consider nonsense to create the most beautiful or most heinous creations.

He plopped down onto the cot and let out a sigh of relief. He was finally himself, in his home, in control of his actions once again. He had Emma and Killian to thank for that and would happily be in debt to them for a long time. He put his hands back behind his head,

lie back, and looked up through the magical star portal on the ceiling. Today was a good day and he was looking forward to a better tomorrow.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

The early morning light cascaded through the window. Emma covered her eyes with her hands to shield the lights. At that moment she wished that as a child she wished for thick dark curtains to cover her windows in her perfect room. She smiled. She couldn't believe Merlin was able to read her thoughts or that he knew her dreams. That would be an interesting thing to learn but also she felt was a little scary too. She hoped there was some way to block someone from reading your thoughts. She looked to Killian and smiled. That could be embarrassing if he happened to eavesdrop at the wrong time.

Her pirate was sleeping peacefully. He'd been under extreme duress the last few days with Mim lording her threats over them. She brushed his hair back from his forehead and leaned down to kiss him gently. Her heart swelled when she looked at him. She really did feel whole when he was near. That had to be some kind of strange magic that she would have to ask Merlin about because she never felt like that before.

She tried to sit up but lay back down quickly. She had a dull ache in her head that was thumping. Damn Dragon. She also had a stinging feeling in her leg. She would have to ask Merlin about a numbing spell or something to ease the pain when she saw him again. Whatever he did last night was wearing off.

"Love, are you ok?" said Killian his voice thick with sleep rousing from the movement.

"I'm ok. Go back to sleep. It's early." Said Emma.

"Love, I'm used to rising with the sun." said Killian sitting up on his elbows.

He looked rested but sleepy. His hair was wild and his eyes were glittering in the morning sun. He smiled and she felt the warmth rush through her body.

"I'm just feeling a little sore today." said Emma giving him a slight smile.

"Would you like me to fetch the wizard?" asked Killian pushing away the cover to get up.

She grabbed his arm and pulled him back to her.

"No, I'll be fine. Let him rest. Could you just hold me?" asked Emma.

"Of course Love." he said smiling.

He shuffled back into the bed pulling her close to him so she was resting her back against his chest. It felt good to hold her in his arms. He held her tighter and gave her little kisses on top of her head.



"Love, you have no idea what my heart when through when I saw you hurt, laying there on the ground." said Killian softly.

"I'm sorry. I was stupid and I shouldn't have rushed. Can't say that I will be looking for a dragon fight again anytime soon." said Emma.

"Well, I'll not be letting you out of my sight anytime soon." he said kissing her.

"Ditto. "she said chuckling.

She snuggled down closer into his arms. Her head already felt a little better as she lay against his warm chest. She closed her eyes. He was running his fingers through her hair rubbing little circles against her head to massage the pain away. She felt herself drifting again and was lulled to sleep.

Killian looked out on the big room before them. He smiled. His princess was snuggled against him and silently sleeping. He felt truly happy. He didn't need anything else and would be happy to just capture that moment and stay in it. Unlike Neverland this would be a time he would happily like to stand still. His heart was full and light, no longer full of revenge and hate. This felt good and right. He held her tight, kissed her on top of her head and closed his eyes letting sleep take him again.

~~~~~E&K~~~~~

The mirror buzzed on the edge of the table. He reached over and picked it up cursing silently in the hopes that it wasn't more danger to be averted. He knew she wouldn't let herself rest if it were. He felt her moving.

"Was that the mirror?"asked Emma.

"Yes, Love. I can handle this. You need your rest." said Killian.

"No, no, it's ok. I'm ok. "said Emma.

He tapped the mirror to reveal Snow White.

"Emma?"asked Snow.

"Mom, Is everything alright? Its early." said Emma.

"Yes, I just wanted to make sure you were alright. Henry was awake last night when I got back to the room. He was eagerly waiting to hear about the fight and wouldn't let me leave out any details. I kept the fact that you were hurt from him last night because I didn't want him to worry. I told him you would be by to see him soon. "said Snow.

"Ok, good. I would like to talk to him in person about \_Everything\_." said Emma.

"Emma? I wanted to let you know that your father and I covered for

you with Regina. We told her you and Belle left to check out the town once she had won the battle. I don't know if she bought it but she didn't ask any further questions." said Snow.

"Thanks Mom, I appreciate it. I don't know how or why I was chosen but I don't want it getting out until I know that I can control my magic. I'm sure that there are others who would try to challenge me for the spot as Merlin's assistant and I don't think I'm ready for that. And Mom, Thank you for taking care of Henry. I hope it's not too much trouble." said Emma.

"Oh, Emma, you don't even have to ask. He's my grandson and I'm happy to help. He's also been a big help with Neal. His little uncle seems to love him. As far as being Merlin's assistant, I think he's been missing for years so I don't expect anyone trying to find him anytime in the near future. I hear your brother crying and I need to go rescue your father. Bye honey." smiled Snow and she disappeared from the mirror.

Emma smiled. She could hear her baby brother crying in the background. This was her life now. She snuggled closer to Killian.

"Everything ok Love?"he asked.

"Seems to be." she said smiling.

She leaned up and gave him a quick kiss.

"I suppose we are going to have to go back to the real world soon." she said sighing.

He held her tightly against him.

"Ah, I see you are awake." said Merlin.

They both sat up quickly at the intrusion.

"Merlin, Hi. " said Emma.

"Sorry for the interruption. I'll have to remember to knock in the future. Old habits and such."

he said giggling nervously.

"Quite alright Mate. Anything the matter?" asked Killian.

"Best night's sleep I've had in awhile." he said stretching his arms out over his head smiling.

"You about ready to go home my dear?" he asked.

"I thought you said I couldn't travel like this?"asked Emma furrowing her brow.

She wasn't ready to leave her little happy bubble yet but she did have to get back to Henry. She had a lot to explain to him.

"Well my dear I believe I've allowed you to endure enough pain. I don't expect you'll be rushing into a dragon fight again anytime

soon?"he asked.

Emma shook her head.

He waved his hands, healed her wounded leg and cured her throbbing head. She felt relief immediately.

"That's amazing." she said.

"Wait, are you saying you allowed her to suffer all night in pain and you could have healed her straight away." said Killian curtly.

"Captain, she's my pupil and there are always lessons to be learned." he said smiling.

Emma held Killian back.

"It's ok, he's right. I was stupid. If I can learn how to do that, it was worth a night of pain." she said.

He relaxed his body.

"Ready?"he said clapping his hands.

She looked to Killian with sadness in her eyes.

"Can we have just a moment?"she asked.

"Certainly, I'll just be outside." he said disappearing.

"The man is quite the eccentric." said Killian.

She nodded.

"Are you ok? I mean are you ok with all of this? With me? The magic? I know this is a lot to take in." she asked.

"Emma, I'm with you every step of the way. I want all of you. I look forward to this journey with you. I'll be by your side whenever you want me and probably when you don't." he said smiling.

"Good. Just checking." she said smiling.

She sat up and pressed her lips to his in a lingering lazy kiss. He pulled her in to deepen the kiss and she felt herself getting lost in the sensations. She pulled back when she remembered the wizard waiting outside the door. He was smiling at her.

"Alright Princess, let's go home." he said.

She nodded.

"OK, Merlin, you can come back!"she called.

They climbed out of their sleeping cocoon that had sheltered them from the madness for one night. She was excited to know that her journey was just beginning, with Killian, with Henry, with her parents, with Merlin and her acceptance of her Home. Life would never be dull for them but she wouldn't have it any other

way.

\_Fin\_

**\*\*A/N:** This is the final chapter of Where have all the Good Men Gone?. I've had so much fun writing this story. I really appreciate all of you that took the time to read this and I hope you enjoyed it. I loved getting all of your feedback and ideas. I want you to know that this AU is not over. I do intend to write a follow up to this story. **\*\***

**\*\*Emma's** learning magic and is now Merlin's apprentice. She has a proper teacher. She can jump realms so that opens up their possibility for adventure. Henry needs to learn about what happened and be introduced to Magic, the Enchanted Forest, Merlin and his mother's new magic.**\*\***

**\*\*The Storybrooke** family is getting stronger but they still have to deal with the ramifications of the new curse and what it means to them all. **\*\***

**\*\*When** I start the new story I'll introduce it to this one as an introduction with the new story title so if you are following you will get an alert. I'll also announce the new story on my blog and I tag my stories using the #CS FF tag.**\*\***

**\*\*Thank you!\*\***

**\*\*Liz \*\***

End  
file.